THE LIFE OF ETHELBERT NEVIN

By VANCE THOMPSON

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ETHELBERT NEVIN

THE LIFE OF
ETHELBERT NEVIN

FROM HIS LETTERS AND
HIS WIFE'S MEMORIES

By VANCE THOMPSON

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The Music of Ethelbert Nevin

God said: "I made the soul of this man,
I wove it subtilely
Of the fire that shone, and the wind that ran,
And the rhythm of the sea.

Dear God! the wind and the flame are light,
They wanton it through space;
But the sea lies moaning day and night,
For the glory of Thy face.

Vance Thompson

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PREFACE

THIS life of Ethelbert Nevin is almost an autobiography. In a way it is he himself who tells the story of his life. The material out of which it is made had long been gathered. Through many years his wife collected everything that bore the mark of his thumb-print and the seal of his personality: his diaries of the boy and the man; his letters—from his first childish note, to his mother, to the last grave and beautiful letter written to his own son; his musical manuscripts—from the pencilled scores of his first compositions to the manuscript of the masterpiece left unfinished on his desk, when "death stepped tacitly and took him."

All this and a great deal more—letters from friends and appreciations from contemporaries—were duly set in order.

My work has largely been that of selection. And if Ethelbert Nevin's strange, sweet personality is not mirrored in this book the fault is mine. Clearly enough it shone in his frank and intimate letters and in his self-revealing diaries. It has been my purpose to let Ethelbert Nevin himself relate the daily incidents of his life, the trend of his studies, his way of living, the means whereby he attained his eminence and won his fame in the world; and to tell, withal, what he thought of his own compositions.

What critical appreciations there are in the book, are—save a few phrases here and there—those of the writers who studied, each year anew, his works as they were given to his public. Many of them have been taken from Rupert Hughes' masterly history of "Contemporary American Composers," from the writings of Philip Hale and others. And a grateful acknowledgment should be paid to Miss Willa Cather, the author of an article, fine in its insight, and exquisitely written, which appeared in the "Courier."

None of the music in this volume has been heretofore published; it includes some of his earliest compositions, which are of peculiar interest to the student of his method and form; and some of his latest, the fine flower of his perfected genius.

Ethelbert Nevin was five-foot-seven in height, slightly built, of a

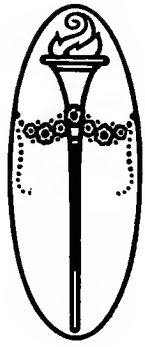
nervous temperament; in him, more than in any other, life seemed to be a divine vibration. He had intimacies (as you shall see in these pages) with other worlds than this. His dark brown hair was early shot with gray. His face was long and pale. His eyes were very blue. His hands were long, slim, white and restless — the hand of Chopin. So you may see him: a slim, tense, boyish figure with moods of gaiety and moods that seemed to shroud him in gray silence; but through each mood shone the sweetness of soul — the singular purity of thought and of love — which is the child's heritage. And he was always a child — a child of genius, but a child; his was the magical world of eternal youth where there are flowers and birds and dreams. (This is quite true, though he had also more than a little of the artist's salutary egotism; when he had completed a work he would permit no one how high soever in authority, to touch or change it.)

He was never to grow old. He died abruptly in the full flush of his young glory, with much done, with much, it may be, undone; but I do not think he is to be placed with the young Keats whose life was a Street of Unfulfilled Intentions. More near is his kinship (if a literary comparison is necessary) to Poe, who, dying, left a finished work, complete, definite, world-reaching; though it was indeed not all of what lay in him to accomplish.

There was a perfect unity between Nevin's life and his thought; his music was an essential expression of his living and of his loving. Perhaps it is not beyond belief that ordinary lives are left to vegetate or perish as they will; while the higher and more passionate souls are linked to an invincible fatality which summons them at the appointed hour. To you and to me their mission may seem unfulfilled — their work not wholly done; but the Higher Wisdom calls to them, and they go. Nevin had given his message of love and aspiration to the world; he might have repeated it in stronger tones; that was all.

Of every man (though love is loth to believe it) one may say: he died just at the right time.

ETHELBERT NEVIN



I WAS TAUGHT IN PARADISE
TO EASE MY HEART OF MELODIES.
John Keats

WHO DEEMETH SMALL THINGS ARE BENEATH HIS STATE,
WILL BE TOO SMALL FOR WHAT IS TRULY GREAT.

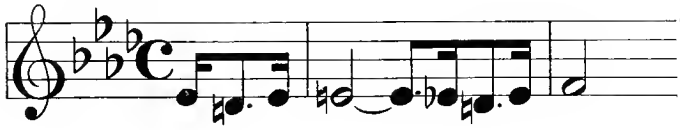
James Russell Lowell

E. N.
Dec. 1900.

Found on Nevin's desk after his death

CHAPTER ONE

"APPLE BLOSSOMS"



CHAPTER ONE

"APPLE BLOSSOMS"

ETHELBERT WOODBRIDGE NEVIN was born at eight o'clock in the evening, November 25th, 1862, at "Vineacre," his father's country place near Pittsburg.

The Nevin family is of Scottish origin, though an important branch of the family was long settled in Munster.

Daniel Nevin, the ancestor of the Nevins of the Cumberland Valley and Western Pennsylvania, was born in New York, August 28th, 1744. He went out to the Cumberland Valley when a young man, and settled on Herron's Branch in Franklin County. There he met the widow of William Reynolds, who kept the inn on the Strasburg road. He married her, and for years this wayside inn was their home. The wife, Elizabeth, was a daughter of John and Mary (Davison) Williamson; notable ancestors. John Williamson, born in 1704, was a cloth merchant in Dublin, but a Scot withal, claiming descent from a sister of William Wallace. He went to the Cumberland Valley in 1731, and married Mary (Wilson) Davison, a daughter of George Davison who had come from Ulster in 1717. The family had position and culture; and the elder son, Hugh Williamson, took a wide career in the life of the young nation. He graduated at the College of Pennsylvania and for three years was a student of Theology, but refused to be ordained into the ministry. He studied medicine at Edinburgh and Utrecht; he was sent by the Colonial government to observe the transits of Mercury and Venus in 1769; four years later he was in London, warning the British government of the impending American Revolution, announcing to Lord Dartmouth and His Majesty's Privy Council that it was inevitable.

While in England, he procured for Benjamin Franklin the famous "Hutchinson Letters." He was a member of the Continental Congress, the author of many scientific and philosophical works and a

member of many of the learned societies of Europe and America. He died in New York, in 1819. It was his only sister — the widow of the wayside inn — who married Daniel Nevin.

The inn, at that time and in that new country, was a civic and social centre. President Washington stopped there on his return from Western Pennsylvania at the time of the "Whiskey Riots." Daniel Nevin, himself, was a soldier, having served for four years, as a private, in Captain Joseph Brady's marching company of Colonel Frederick Watts' regiment. He died in 1813, after a long and successful life. Of his five children two were sons. Each of them attained eminence. The elder, John Nevin, was a graduate and trustee of Dickinson College and one of the earliest "abolitionists" in the country. The younger son, Major David Nevin, was a soldier and politician.

John Nevin married in 1802 Martha McCracken, daughter of William and Elizabeth (Finley) McCracken. They had eight children. The five sons were all men of influence in their day — they were authors, theologians, professors, men of large affairs. The eldest, Dr. John Williamson Nevin — of whom Dollinger said that he and Channing were the only theologians America had produced — was the author of "Biblical Antiquities" and of many controversial books on Protestantism that excited interest the world over. As the author of "The Spirit World" and "The Inspiration of the Bible" his place in religious literature is an abiding one.

The second of John Nevin's sons was William McCracken Nevin, professor of ancient languages and *belles lettres* in Marshall and Franklin College, and a poet. The third son, Daniel, was a clergyman, author and teacher, the first pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Sewickley. The fourth son, Theodore Hugh Nevin, was a banker and leading citizen of Pittsburg, very prominent in the Presbyterian church.

The fifth son of John Nevin was Robert Peebles Nevin, whose fifth child was Ethelbert Woodbridge Nevin, the composer.

It is noteworthy that the history of the collateral branch of the Nevin family was virtually the same; the sons of Major David Nevin were scholars and clergymen, such as Doctor Edwin Henry Nevin, college president, "anti-slavery" advocate, author and poet; and the Reverend Dr. Alfred Nevin, author of many religious works and of several volumes of church history; or soldiers like Major David Robert Bruce Nevin of Civil War fame. Indeed, of the Nevin family it may be said that for many generations the men were men of the pen or men of the sword — fighting in one way or the other for great causes.

Robert Peebles Nevin

Robert Peebles Nevin, the father of Ethelbert Nevin, was born on his father's farm near Upper Strasburg, Franklin County, in 1820; the day was July the thirty-first. He graduated at Jefferson College in 1842. After leaving college he went into business in Pittsburg, but retired in a few years to give himself to literary work. He wrote for the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *Knickerbocker Magazine* and *Lippincott's*. With his nephew, he founded the *Evening Leader* of Pittsburg, and later the *Pittsburg Times*. He was a man of fine talent. He wrote well in prose and verse. His books are not yet forgotten—his "Tales of a Traveller," his "Black Robes" and "Les Trois Rois." As a journalist he ranked very high, standing with the dozen men, East and West, who led the public thought of his day. He was also a musician of fine and high culture. One of his songs, "Our Nominee," was extremely popular during the campaign of Polk for the Presidency. Two of his poems, Ethelbert set to music: "Sleeping and Dreaming," which appears in the "Songs from Vineacre" series, and "The Boys of Sewickley Valley," composed at the close of the Spanish-

American War, the words having been written in honor of the Sewickley soldiers who fell in the Civil War.

On his mother's side, Ethelbert Nevin was descended from an ancient Scottish family, the Oliphants of Gash, one of whom — Sir William Oliphant of Abergeldie — married the daughter of Robert Bruce. In 1721 Duncan Oliphant of Gash came to America. He purchased an estate of four hundred acres in Amwell Township, New Jersey. His second son, John, crossed the mountains into Pennsylvania in 1749. With his son, Andrew, he was present at Braddock's defeat in 1755. After the Revolution, Andrew bought an estate in Fayette County. His two sons, Colonel John and Andrew Oliphant, were the first iron masters of Pennsylvania, building in 1796 the "Sylvan Forges." Colonel John Oliphant married a neice of the Reverend Samuel Woodbridge. His grandaughter, Elizabeth Duncan, married Robert P. Nevin and was the mother of Ethelbert Nevin.

Thus, on both sides, Ethelbert Nevin traced his ancestry to Scottish sources — the blood of Bruce and Wallace met in his veins — though there was, through multiple marriages, a distinct strain of Irish blood. This strong Keltic element was in his blood, as it was in his temperament and in his music.

Ethelbert was the fifth born in a family of eight children. He was named after his mother's younger brother, Ethelbert Oliphant, who died on the battlefield, a few months before the child was born. This tragic death had been a great shock to Mrs. Nevin. She lay in a dim chamber and her only consolation was music played softly in an outer room. We know so little of the vital forces — so little of antenatal influences — that it is difficult to estimate what effect those months of sadness, lightened only by music, may have had upon the little son who was to be born to her. Ethelbert was like few other children, like few other men. Into the very texture of his life — into the delicate fibre of it — music was woven; and a sadness that seemed to be remembered rather than known. Certainly rarely between mother and son have the pre-natal ties persisted so in-

tensely. More truly than of most sons it may be said that his life was a prolongation—an adumbration of hers. He thought of her always; he lived in her; they were never dis-associated; and only by a little while did he survive her death. Her loss made him other than he was. His mother was herself a musician of long training and wide culture. It was for her, the first grand piano ever seen in Western Pennsylvania was carted across the Alleghany Mountains; this was in the days of her young girlhood. And from Ethelbert's babyhood her mother-love was expressed in music.

Ethelbert's Mother and Sister

The old home at Vineacre with its big hearthstone and its kindly roof, which sheltered so many children and so many artistic aspirations, was one of the dominant influences in Ethelbert's life.

"Down the Ohio river, some fifteen miles from Pittsburg, is Edgeworth," wrote a sympathetic visitor. "There on the green wooded hills that rise abruptly from the river, is Vineacre, the old mansion where Ethelbert Nevin was born and where he spent his boyhood; a happy, happy boyhood it was, for there was music in the river and in the trees, and music in the boy's heart; and the woods were full of his singing, feathered brothers, and the world was a good place to live in. It was there he wrote his 'Serenade' and 'O, That We Two Were Maying' and 'Doris;' in such surroundings 'Narcissus' was born, that melody as familiar now as the world's oldest classics, that everyone of us seems to have heard some summer day in the fields and woods when we were children, and then lost it again, until this boy on the banks of the Ohio brought it back to us from Arcady.

CHAPTER ONE

"But back to Vineacre. It is a big, old rambling house that has been frequently added to and rebuilt to conform to the taste of its occupants. Mr. Nevin has four brothers, all men of decided tastes, and they each have apartments to suit their hobbies. In the centre of the house is the library, the big room lined with books from floor to ceiling, where Robert Nevin, Ethelbert's father, student and man of letters, still spends his tranquil days in study."

"VINEACRE"

This description was written shortly before Ethelbert's death, but the Vineacre it describes was the Vineacre he knew all his life. The home life there was gracious. There was always music. There was always talk of books and pictures. There were always children playing in the old, rambling house, and troops of cousins and kin. In a memoir, written for the more intimate friends of the family, at a

time when Ethelbert Nevin had already won his fame in the world, his mother said:

"His babyhood was that of all others, only especially dear to his parents. As he grew older, he became a winsome, lovable child, finding a place in the hearts of all his relatives, many of whom lived near him. He grew to be a pretty child, not beautiful; but his lovely brown curly locks and his expressive blue eyes were his chief charms. His nurse was devoted to him. It was she who taught him his first songs. She took the greatest pleasure in dressing him in his best clothes and, concealing herself behind a door or screen, would start him into a room, perhaps full of guests, and insist upon his showing off his charms and accomplishments, which she had taught him. His first song was one, that seems now to have been lost sight of, as I can find no record of it whatever; but it was taught by this nurse. It ran this way and was a very much mixed up piece of music:

Ethelbert and His Nurse

'Now Moses, don't touch it;
Now Moses, you'll catch it;
Now Moses, don't you hear what I say?'

His rendering of it was very funny and very taking and for a long time he was continually called upon to sing that song. Then he learned other songs and would dance away while singing them with the greatest abandonment — receiving enough applause to turn even a tiny child's head.

"As he was born during the progress of our Civil War, or rather near the close of it, the war songs, 'Marching Through Georgia,' 'Tenting on the Old Camp Ground,' and others, were very popular, all of which he learned to sing when about three years old. At the age of five, he would sit on the piano stool and play his own accom-

paniments to these songs. Even at this age his soul seemed to be filled with music. He would see his cousins, a little older than himself, starting off to their music lessons and he, in his childish way, would roll up some music, put it under his arm and start off, too. When questioned as to where he was going he would answer: 'Oh, I must go and take my music lessons.' When a very small child of five years, and the night before Christmas, his father came home with a music-box in his pocket. He took the boy on his knee and began telling him a story of the Holy time. Now and then to make the story more effective his father would put his hand in his pocket and touch the spring of the music-box. The child firmly believed that the music came from the angels in Heaven, and his excitement over it was intense. It was a long time before he found out the ruse that had been played upon him. Then when he came along to the age of seven, eight and nine, when I suppose every boy thinks it his duty to pay some attention to base ball, he tried very hard to like the game and be interested in it. One day when his elder brothers and some friends were organizing a game he came rushing in to his father, very much excited, his cheeks flushed and his eyes dancing with delight, and with the greatest enthusiasm he shouted: 'Oh, papa, I am elected to the ball game!' 'Why,' said his father, 'what are you elected to do in the ball game?' 'Oh, I'm elected to be water-carrier,' he replied. He felt this to be a very great honor indeed. I must admit it was the highest ever conferred upon him in that profession. Often have I been seated at a window which overlooked a yard where the children played, and he, with his playmates, would start a game of ball. While playing apparently greatly interested, with a sudden and unexpected movement, he would throw his bat on the ground and rush into the house and to the piano. After having noticed this several times, I asked him one day why he did that. 'Because I just thought of something I wanted to play,' he replied. He never seemed to care for boys' sports and games. He preferred the society of his girl cousins who were older

AGED THREE
TAKEN IN PITTSBURG

AGED NINE
TAKEN IN CHICAGO

AGED FIFTEEN
TAKEN IN DRESDEN, GERMANY

ETHELBERT NEVIN

than he and their young girl friends. Oftimes these cousins would take him away from his home and keep him a whole day at a time saying when they returned him: 'We have just had lots of fun with him.'

"From his very earliest years he showed the most lovable, sympathetic, tender nature, but alas, the most nervous temperament possible to imagine. Whenever he could bestow a favor or a delicate attention upon any of his relatives or friends, or those he loved, he was always eager to do it. He would come in with his little hands full of violets and say (even before he could speak plainly): 'I have brought you some violets for your birthday.' This would come from his own loving thoughts."

His first school was at Edgeworth, where many of the pupils were kith and kin. "It was a school with no 'bugbear,'" his teacher said, "learning was not hard; and his teachers all loved the earnest, sympathetic, tender, high-strung lad." The rich nature of the child flowered early. Sentiments, will, intelligence, were all precocious. At six years of age he could read and write and sing, playing his own accompaniments; and he was a graceful little dancer. As his mother points out, music was always his second language. Until he was eight years of age his musical instruction was merely absorbed from his parents.

His first formal piano lessons were given by Von der Heide at the Williams Conservatory in Pittsburg, with whom he studied for two months. His next teacher was William Guenther, who wrote of him: "Music was born in him and he was my brightest pupil. He came to me for instruction when he was but eight years old and was so small I had to help him on the piano stool. In less than one year he had learned to compose little melodies which were subject to but minor corrections at my hands. In all his work, from his boyhood up, he was free from any attempt at imitation and his compositions were entirely original."

Mr. Guenther's memory is not quite exact. Ethelbert was ten

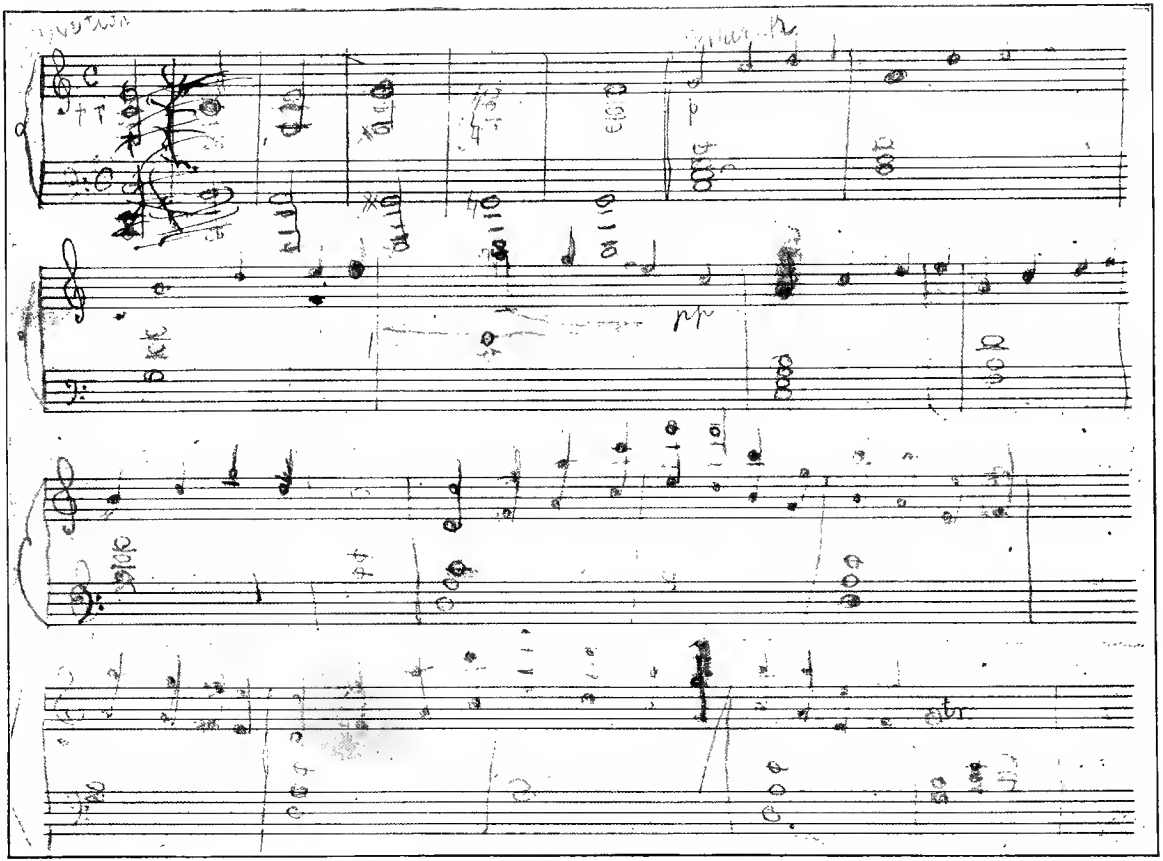
years old when he took those lessons. A little later his first musical composition, the "Lilian Polka," written for his little sister, was published. On the cover was printed:

"By Bertie Nevin
Aged eleven."

A rhyme that was sung to him by his playmates until he was a very weary child. That year he took part in his first public concert. It was given by Guenther's pupils at Library Hall, and Ethelbert played the Wagner-Liszt "Tannhaüser" march. At that time he had a clear, sweet soprano voice and sang often in the concerts given by the "Nevin Octette." In the Gounod Club's production of "Jeanette's Wedding" he sang the part of the small boy. When the family went abroad in 1877, Ethelbert sang in the surpliced choir of the Episcopal Church in Rome, where for many years his cousin, Dr. Robert Jenkins Nevin, was rector. His voice is said to have been "a very beautiful one, sweet, melodious and clear" and he expected then to sing all his life. "When he was fourteen his voice left him," Miss Cather writes in the article I have already quoted, "but the heart in him was still singing, as it will always. He was very miserable when he could not sing any more, until in the language of an old book, the Comforter came to him, and he began to write songs of his own and found it almost as satisfactory as singing other peoples'. He never sings in public now, but it is possible to sing very well without much voice, and he can do it."

It was during this year abroad, 1877–1878, that Ethelbert took lessons on the piano from Boehme[1], then considered the best, or one of the best teachers in Dresden. His mother wrote:

"He was to take three lessons a week of one hour's duration, but often this professor would overstay his time to the length of two hours and more, so interested did they become in each other, teacher and pupil. They would sing and play and talk together, evidently very contented and happy in each other's society. He had the op-



Ethelbert Nevin's Manuscript of the "Lilian Polka," Written when He was Eleven Years of Age

portunity of hearing all the best music and operas at that time in Leipsic, Berlin, Vienna and Dresden. He was an ardent admirer of all the works of art in those different cities and even studied them with great care and interest."

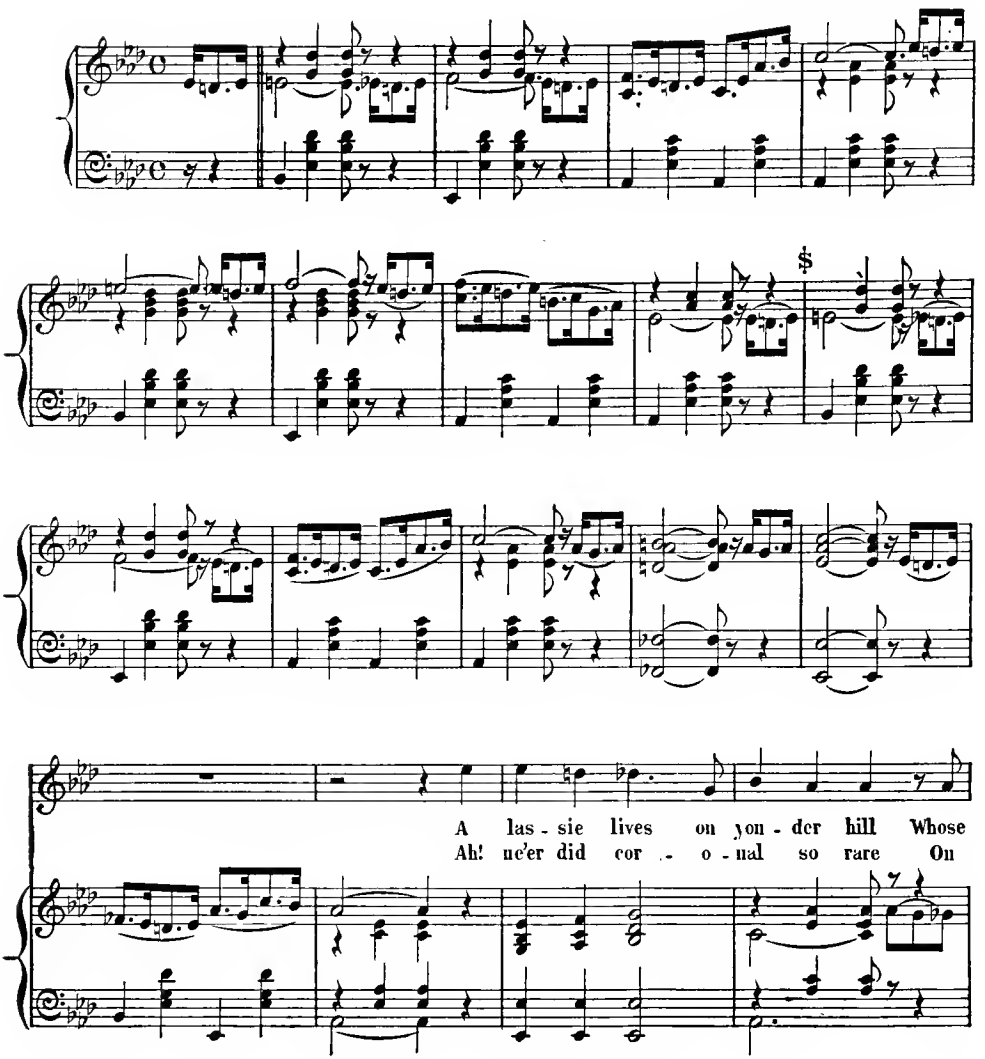
Upon his return to Vineacre, Ethelbert entered the Western University of Pennsylvania. He had made his preliminary studies at the Sewickley Academy and in the preparatory department of the University. He remained until the close of his freshman year in 1879. This ended his collegiate study. He was never a scholar in the academic sense, for his "little Latin and less Greek" soon faded away; but few men had a wider or more sympathetic knowledge of modern *belles-lettres*. That finer education he had absorbed in his cultured home and had acquired in his life-long travels in many lands. His acquaintance with French literature was singularly wide, and he was always an ardent student of German and Italian verse.

At the end of his freshman year he made up his mind that his way in life was to be the way of music. He had proved his right to make this decision. He had already written several pieces which clearly denoted his singular talent, and were shortly followed by songs like "Good-night, Good-night, Beloved," "One Spring Morning" and "Doris." He had played at a number of concerts and in his freshman year — then seventeen years of age — he played Chopin's Polonaise in E flat major, with full orchestra, at a public performance in Pittsburg. In spite of this beginning — so splendid in its promise — his father was strongly opposed to his entering upon the career of a professional musician — of being "a piano-player." It was not that Mr. Nevin's love for music was less high and sincere than Ethelbert's. In father and son was the same strong love for "what is beautiful in God's Nature and in man's Art." But those days in Western Pennsylvania were Philistine days. They were days of fortune-building. And a boy, if he had other aspirations than money-making, was taught to look to the liberal professions — to the Church, to law, to medicine — as the only dignified ways of life.

APPLE-BLOSSOMS.

SONG AND DANCE.

By "WOODBRIDGE."



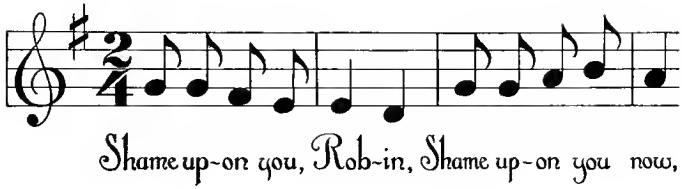
Over music, as a professional career, lay the same obloquy once cast upon the stage. Mr. Nevin, though himself an artist, was not uninfluenced by the common thought of his generation. At his request Ethelbert was entered as a clerk in the offices of the Pennsylvania Railway in Pittsburg. This experiment — a very painful one for the sensitive lad — lasted only a few months. One night he went to his father (in the big, book-lined room) and begged to be released from that uncongenial work.

"Let me be poor all my life and be a musician," he said.

At last his father consented: and this winter of 1880 and 1881 Ethelbert spent in study and regular practice at home, at the same time taking, by letter, lessons in counterpoint from Dr. S. Austin Pearce[2] of New York. The next autumn he went to Boston.

CHAPTER TWO

"THE MILK MAID"



CHAPTER TWO

"THE MILK MAID"

EARLY in the autumn of 1881, Ethelbert Nevin then a sensitive, delicate lad of eighteen, left his home for the first time and set out alone for Boston, the "centre of music in America," he thought. He carried a single letter of introduction to a Boston banker, who "turned the cold shoulder" on him. So quite unfriended, he was left to make his own way in the social and musical world of the Eastern city. He had always a wonderful personal charm. As a child and as a man there was a singular winsomeness about him, which gained him friends everywhere. It is difficult to describe that peculiar quality; it was made up of gentleness, of frankness and of unselfishness; but there was above all a sympathetic interest in the lives of others which was magnetic in its attractiveness. A little of this is seen in his diaries and in the many letters he wrote to his kin, his friends, his business associates. There is not a line, not a phrase which does not show this essential sweetness and generosity. There is not one unkind word. Of no other man, who took so wide a career in public life — for from childhood he was before the public — could it be said that he never made an enemy. There was no taint of vanity in him; there was no shadow of jealousy. There was a high and very beautiful love for humanity, for men and women and children; and bringing to his friends tenderness and sympathy, he was never met with anything but love. This statement is scrupulously exact. (Even that discourteous banker had become his friend, had he not wholly ignored the timid lad.)

Left wholly to his own resources Ethelbert moved from his hotel to a boarding-house, at 101 Boylston Street. The first thing he did was to rent a piano. Then he sought out the man who stood at the top of his profession in the Boston of that day, B. J. Lang,[3] a pupil of Von Bülow and Liszt. He was told to come the next week when

Mr. Lang would talk with him. What happened he related in a letter to his mother:

> "Mr. Lang was busy in his room. I went and sat outside as I was too early. Soon he came out, welcomed me, took me into his room and asked me to play — in this manner: 'Now I want you to amuse me, not as if I were to be your instructor, but as if I were some fellow you were entertaining.' I played that little Album Leaf of Kirchner's. He said: 'Very interesting; now play me something else.' So I played that Romance of Schumann's. He said: 'Very interesting indeed. Now play me something frivolous.' I suggested Olivette, but he said: 'No, not quite so frivolous as that.' So I played Winkelmann's Schottische — a scale two or three times; then he remarked: 'You are very interesting.' (His favorite expression, I presume.) 'Very, indeed, and you play with an immense amount of expression. Your manner of playing is graceful, light and rippling, but you lack aplomb and firmness. I am going to take an interest in you — you have inspired it and if you will be patient and bear with me for six lessons, I will make you feel satisfied with yourself.'
>
> "So he gave me some of the stupidest, meanest exercises by Cramer. The ones I took in Dresden were simply paradise to these. Mr. Lang said: 'Now practice this one' (marking one) 'for two hours every day' 'and this scale I have written for you an hour and a half, if you get time.' Well, his writing looks more like hieroglyphics than anything else I have ever seen, so it took me a long time to figure it out. I am to go back again on Monday. He invited me to go to the St. Cecilia Club tonight. He wields the *baton* there, you know."

He "inspired an interest" not only in Mr. Lang, but in Stephen A. Emery,[4] from whom he took his first lesson in harmony that day, and of whom he wrote:

> "I am very much pleased with Mr. Emery and he seemed pleased with me, because I was the only one who asked

any questions; and, would you believe it, I have learned a great deal about intervals and so forth."

In another long letter to his mother he wrote:

"With three and a half hours at the piano, and the frightfully long lessons to prepare for Mr. Emery in Harmony for Monday, I am pretty busy. I don't see how I am going to commit it all to memory and write it, but it has to be done. Just think—to write forty-five scales, memorize all the names of the different degrees, intervals and so forth! Tomorrow morning I must attend a lecture on the Analysis of Berlioz's Overture to 'Romeo and Juliet' and in the afternoon a lecture on consecutive Fifths and Octaves. My brain is one conglomeration of Thirds, Fifths, Sixths, Sevenths—beans, brown bread—'Lift your fourth finger higher'—'Come again on Monday'—and hieroglyphics. After supper I went to the St. Cecilia Club. The music was splendid. Forty men singing Mendelssohn's quartettes. It was perfect. They are practicing now because Sherwood, Joseffy and Theodore Thomas are coming to hear them. I hope I shall be able to go.

"Mr. Lang asked me what I did when I was not studying. I replied: 'Sitting in my room looking out of the window, or walking in the park.'

"'Have you no acquaintances?' 'No, Sir,' I replied. 'Well,' he said, 'I will see that you know some nice people. Now, there is a Mr. Smith (glad I remember the name) from . . . He is a fine pianist, about your age and a nice fellow, I want you to meet him. There is a room in the upper part of this building full of the choicest and finest music ever published. A legacy left by a wealthy person for the use of students. You could practice there, (in the Burrage Room). There are two Chickering grands. You and Mr. Smith could play duets for two pianos.'

"Mr. Lang's room is a curiosity. It is very small, about half the size of mine at home, and a little larger than the blue room. In it are two pianos and a dumb keyboard. He sits at the piano back of mine, the keyboard not quite so

high. Then he has a high book-case filled with music, two writing-desks, a sofa and a hundred and one beautiful things lying about the room. A great many fine engravings and music manuscript of great composers and so forth.

"My back aches fearfully this evening, not like the old pain, however, but only tired sitting at the piano three and a half hours and stooping as I always do. Mr. Lang says this is not good for piano-playing or for health. He is very nice but he gets angry sometimes; however, I expect to get along very well with him. I do not think he will throw me out of the window of the third floor front. I am a little slow in getting things, but once I get them I have them for all time.

"Please ask Father to send me $15 to pay my board and to get a ticket for the Symphony Concert. I received thirty last week but it all went for four months' piano-rent, in advance, and one week's board. I have about four dollars in hand. Write to me soon and give my love to all the family. Try to tell me something good for the blues. I get SO discouraged. "Believe me most lovingly,

"Bertie."

September 15, 1881.

It is from his letters to his mother that one gets the clearest picture of his life in Boston. For the first few weeks, it was a solitary life. He was ill, now and then, for the change of climate had affected his health, always delicate; but he worked continuously, ten and twelve hours a day, at his piano and at his writing-table.

"In the evening," he wrote, "when it is too late to do anything and too early to light the gas, I sit dreaming at the window and try to imagine what you are all doing at home. And I think I could give up my piano, music and everything, to be with you all. But then I turn round and see my piano standing there, staring me in the face, and I go to work more earnestly than ever—not that I am not enjoying myself, too, but even in the midst of my enjoyment, there is a certain quivering at my heart, a longing for home."

And then:

"I know I shan't have anything but practice tomorrow, as Mr. Lang gave me six pages of a song of Rubinstein, transcribed with variations by Liszt, and you may know it is difficult, but I have not failed with any of my studies so far, and I'm not going to drop on this one if I have to practice twenty-five hours a day. Don't quite know where

B. J. Lang

I'm going to get the twenty-fifth, but I must somehow. Mr. Emery told me he is quite satisfied that I know all about the chords of the Seventh, and he only found one mistake in all my exercises. Mr. Lang also told me that I am doing well. So you see I have quite an exalted opinion of myself this evening. Dear only knows what a fall may await me tomorrow, but I am trying to live by the day."

CHAPTER TWO

The first song he wrote in Boston was "The Milk Maid," which he dedicated to Madame de Angelis, the singer, whose acquaintance he made through Mr. Lang. Through her he procured his first pupils, Mr. H . . . and a little girl.

He wrote his mother:

> "I am to charge Mr. H. fifteen dollars for twenty-five lessons, giving three lessons a week, and the little girl ten dollars, as that is all she can afford to pay. It is not very much but it is a help. Ben Butler asked Madame de Angelis to give a recital in the Masonic Temple and she has asked me to play. I told her I would."

Then, October 27th, he announces that "The Lover" is out and that he has sent forty copies home; and

> "I am having a song published at Ditson's, with words from Tennyson's 'Queen Mary.' It looks rather queer to see 'Nevin' in the same line with Mendelssohn, Schumann, Verdi, Rubinstein and so forth,—but such is life. I composed it yesterday, October 26th, and took it down to Ditson, and found Mr. Ditson very kind. It will be out in three or four weeks. He has, of course, the copyright. I move to my new quarters tomorrow."

The new quarters were in Newton Street, "a sunny room with gas, coal and meals for $10 a week." Six weeks only had elapsed since he began his studies with Mr. Lang; and he had become his favorite pupil and had made many friends in the musical world. He and one other of Mr. Lang's "advanced pupils" were invited to the banquet given in honor of Liszt's seventieth birthday where

> "Mr. Sherwood played divinely. He gave an Étude of Liszt, and such execution I have never heard; plays even better than Madeleine Schiller. The committee which consists of H. W. Longfellow, B. J. Lang and W. H. Sherwood, sent Liszt a cablegram of congratulation on his birthday. I sat between the editor of the *Boston Journal* and Mr. D . . . who sings splendidly and is considered one

of the best vocal masters in Boston. My *vis-à-vis* was a daughter of Mapleson, and next to her sat a celebrated pianist. Mr. Lang, you know, was a pupil of Liszt, and travelled with him for quite a long time. I am so glad to study under the pupil of such a great master."

In November he wrote:

"Am still at five-finger exercises—eight weeks of them. Attended a delightful Symphony Concert last night, and the orchestra played Beethoven's Second Symphony, my favorite, I think. Went to Everett Hale's Church this morning and this evening to the Handel and Haydn rehearsal, to hear the 'Creation.' Mr. Lang asked me if I cared to hear him practice, so I met him this evening at Chickering's after the Handel and Haydn. He played until ten o'clock on a Rubinstein Concerto, which he is going to play at one of the Philharmonic Concerts. I am going to have the second piano part to play with him. Just think of playing with such an artist! He is without exception the cleanest, broadest and most truly artistic (in every sense of the word) pianist I have yet heard. He does not stoop to any of the little tricks which are effective but not artistic. He is too much of a man for that."

November the 25th (his birthday) he wrote to his mother:

"As my practicing is all finished and I am too tired to work at my Harmony, I will give myself a birthday present by writing to you. Today I am nineteen. Whew! Am I not getting old? But strange to say I do not feel a bit older than I did this time yesterday. I took my lesson from Mr. Lang on Thanksgiving day. It was a long one, from twelve to one-fifteen. Mr. Lang told me that Raff's Étude was an immense thing, and I am to play it without my notes on Monday. He gave me a very difficult Étude of Moscheles, in broken Thirds and Sixths, and I have been practicing nearly all day at it. I don't know whether you will believe me, but it is true nevertheless. I am going to take a class in the Mission Sunday School commencing

next Sunday. It is a class of little girls and I am to tell them nice little Sunday stories and so forth. I have had a number of very pretty birthday gifts and I thank you all very much. I think if you could hear the Raff Étude I am studying it would almost make you weep,—it is the saddest and sweetest thing I have ever heard and I never get tired playing it."

December he wrote:

"Mr. Lang has given me Mendelssohn's Concerto in B flat to play with the orchestra. Isn't it grand? It is 29 pages long, very difficult and very brilliant. He played it with me on his piano—it is arranged for two pianos. He says of all Concertos of Chopin, Liszt, Beethoven, Mozart, etc., this is the most *taking*. The only trouble is that you can't play it on one piano with effect. Have been having very hard work with Rubinstein's Gavotte. It is simply terriffic, such stretches!"

A week later he played the Mendelssohn Concerto for Mr. Lang and received the "first genuine compliment" his teacher had given him:

"After I had finished my playing, he said: 'When did I give you that?' 'My last lesson,' I replied. 'I thought so,' he answered, 'but fancied I must be mistaken, as you played it so well!' "

In his Christmas letter he wrote:

"All day Thursday I was in a gale and was stopped in my lesson as something had gone wrong. Angry? Why he was raving, almost. There I sat like a perfect dummy and let him heap his wrath on my head without saying 'beans.' But I was so humiliated I was almost afraid to go back to my lesson on Monday . . . I injured my hand practicing six hours a day and Mr. Lang told me to practice only four. At the same time he gave me an Étude of Liszt, a Fugue of Bach and my pet little exercises, which I could not possibly learn in that short time; so I practiced eight hours.

Just eight hours out of twelve at the piano! Consequently I have strained my hand and could practice only two this morning. Have finished my Concerto and am ready to play it with the orchestra. Of course my pride has gone up about ninety-nine per cent, but there is no telling how it may fall down tomorrow. Mr. Lang has put me at Bach's Well-Tempered Clavichord and says it must be my daily bread. (Now I wonder when I say 'Give us this day our daily bread,' am I asking for Bach's Well-Tempered Clavichord?) The 'well-tempered' consists of Preludes and Fugues in seven flats and seven sharps and in every key on the pianoforte. The Fugues are in two, three and four subjects and a person has to be particularly 'well-tempered' to practice them. But I am swimming along and I don't want to stop for anything."

January 27th, 1881, he wrote:

"Here is some news. I am going to make my *début* with orchestra in Music Hall on Sunday, February 12th. How does that strike you? I am open to congratulations. The instrument on which I am to perform is the cymbals. Four of Mr. Lang's pupils are to play: Frank Smith, bass drum; Mr. Mayo, triangle; Mr. Lyon, tenor drum; and Mr. Nevin, cymbals. The "Cecilia," under Mr. Lang's direction, is to give Berlioz' *Requiem.* It is one of the most massive, magnificent works ever written. Mr. Lang was very anxious that I should attend rehearsals and it would be impossible unless I took part in the orchestra.

"Now, I have a deep scheme which I hope you and father will sanction. I am anxious to spend another winter under Mr. Lang, and if, on April the first, I can get an organ to play, either in Boston or vicinity, at a salary, may I not accept it? It will necessitate my remaining in Boston during the summer, but it would help pay my expenses. Of course, I am so anxious to see you all, but work must come before pleasure, and I cannot possibly get a position for the winter months. I feel more firmly convinced that I must remain steadily at work to accomplish anything, and now is the time for it, while my imagination is yet

young and my strength good. If I could only make most of my own way next year! I trust the year following that father will be able to send me to Germany to complete my musical education. I know, mother will say at first that she cannot let me go so far away, but surely she knows that my future wealth and happiness are to come from my musical profession, so it surely must be right. We have been having examinations all morning. I got ninety-seven per cent out of a hundred. Is not that pretty good?"

March 4th, 1882:

"My dear Mother:

Tempus has been more than *fugiting* this week. It hardly seems a day since Walter came, while it is a week this morning. I have been very busy practicing to make up for my short vacation. This afternoon I went out to Savin Hill where there is a beautiful view of the sea, and where the boats and steamers were scattered, and everything looked so peaceful and serene I almost wished that I could bury myself in one of the ships, away out in the deep, and give up all the toil and worry of trying to be an artist. Oh, how discouraged I am! I don't think I shall live to be great, and I don't see how I can live if I'm not. But I shall have to 'work on' until the sun goes from behind the dark clouds which obscure it now. Lily's picture came and, oh, how I devoured it, so to speak. She seems so much older, and I am so proud of my little sister.

"With love to you all, believe me

"Your loving son,

"Ethelbert."

March 12th, 1882:

"My dear Mother:

Another week commenced, and I am starting off admirably with a letter to you. On Monday I took a lesson but, to my amazement, Mr. Lang put me into Chopin's

Études. Now really I do want a little praise, as this winter since September the 13th, I have had Cramer's Fifty Études; 24 Moscheles' Études, Bach's Well-Tempered Clavichord, Preludes and Fugues and a manuscript book full of technical works; and here I have Chopin's Études, each of which is a regular concert piece, and besides all this, I have taken twenty-five pieces from Chopin, Beethoven, Mozart and Raff, Schumann, Liszt, Mendelssohn, Bach, etc. Now if that hasn't been seven months' work I am pretty much mistaken. Saturday I went to the last Symphony Concert of the season. They gave Beethoven's Easter Piece, his Choral Ninth Symphony. It is grand beyond conception. Oh, how I have enjoyed these delightful concerts, and I am so sorry to think they are all over for the season. I must end. Give lots of love to all the family.

"Your loving son,

"Bert.

"Father's letter just received. I haven't any news except that I shall be home in April."

That summer he spent at Vineacre; in September he returned to Boston, taking rooms at 6 Union Park, and by Mr. Lang's advice, printed an advertisement in the *Transcript* for piano pupils.

"It is very hard," he wrote, "to get pupils, when there are 275 teachers who have been here at least five years, and twenty-eight of Mr. Lang's pupils also give lessons; and then there are Mr. Lang and Mr. Sherwood who teach, not counting hundreds of pupils at the Conservatory. All Mr. Lang's pupils play as well, and many of them better than I. But should I get four pupils I shall pay for my own lessons, and if I get five I can take German."

Nothing came of the advertisement at the time, and he found it equally difficult to get an organ in one of the churches. Very characteristic was his letter of October 2nd.

CHAPTER TWO

"My dear Mother:

Had intended writing you last night but it was such a lovely evening I could not resist the temptation to take a long walk. I walked over to Back Bay and down Newbury Street and I heard an organ as I passed Dr. Duryea's Church (Congregational). As the service was about commencing I went in. I don't know when I have enjoyed an evening so much. I could almost imagine myself in our church at home, and we had the same hymn book and the service was very like ours. Mr. Duryea is a most interesting man and actually I can remember the text. Yesterday I took a little excursion all by myself down to the quiet old town of Lynn. There was a steamer at Atlantic Avenue that went across the harbor. Oh, how beautiful it was,—the sun dancing on the far stretch of water, and the ships in full sail, resembling sea gulls sitting on the water with spread wings ready for soaring. It was all so still and quiet with the exception of our busy little tug. I thought of you. The beauty of the sea sent my thoughts to you and home and all I love. I often think that when I die *I wish I might be buried by the sea*, as I am sure I could always hear the sweet, ceaseless, roar,—to me it is never monotonous. Lynn is not so quaint nor primitive as I expected. However, the ride along the beach made up for all that. Am contemplating writing a little Impromptu on the theme you have so often heard me sing. It runs in my head all the time.

"Apropos of writing music, I have almost completed my Musical Sketch and have added a Love Song.

"With love to all,

"Your Bert.

"P. S. Was ever boy blessed with such a mother as mine!"

In October he began taking lessons from Carl Seidhoff whom he describes as the "best German teacher in Boston." And his daily work at the piano went on.

He wrote his mother:

"I do nothing but practice, practice, practice five-finger exercises for technique. The most uninteresting kind of work. However, I see the importance of working diligently at them. Mr. Lang is very encouraging, but then imagine five and a half hours, as I practiced yesterday on nothing but exercises for technique! Mr. Lang and I had quite a scare the other day, and I do believe he was the more frightened of the two. I was playing one of Beethoven's Sonatas when suddenly my third finger refused to go either up or down. It seemed utterly powerless and dead. I exclaimed: 'Why what is the matter with my finger?' He looked at it and there it was perfectly stiff. He jumped from his chair, took my hand and rubbed some of the muscles. After a time it came to life again, but he was very much frightened and told me I would have to be more careful.

"What is sister doing with her music? I hope she is not at that sonata, as it is not good to have her work just now. Don't let her practice too long. An hour or hour and a half is abundance. So many hands have been ruined by too much practice when they are young and not strong and the touch is often made dull and heavy instead of light and elastic. My German is getting on nicely and I enjoy it so much. It is a relaxation after the continuous practicing.

"I have been composing quite a deal for the last few weeks. I finished an Andante Gracioso, a Mazurka-Caprice, a Love Song, a Valse and a Serenade, besides a song. The words are Jean Ingelow's. Am at work now upon a Polonaise for the piano and a Trio for piano, violin and 'cello. Am going to have three movements, allegro, romance and andante-presto. It takes about fifteen minutes to play the first movement. I am trying to summon courage to take my composition to Schmidt, a publisher here. But there are so few things accepted that I am horribly afraid. . . . Mr. Lang has given me a Sgambati Étude. It is the most difficult thing I have as yet attempted, but I hope to finish it by Wednesday. I have composed an Impromptu and a

Serenata which Mr. Lang says are by far the best things I have done as yet, only the Impromptu is so hard to play. I think it would be a good joke to ask Mr. Lang to give it to me to study! He tells me I am playing much better now. The muscles of my hands and arms are strengthened and the swollen veins are going down. Now you must not be anxious about this, for it is not at all serious."

And again:

"My brain is full of ideas, which are unfortunately greatly confused, and my pen refuses to set them down. You ask me why I do not have them published. It costs too much, and I am spending enough money on my musical education, without putting any more upon my silly and overestimated compositions. You know that reams upon reams of music paper must be spoiled before one composition is good enough to be sent out to face the world. Three compositions which I had sent to Miss Jacoby brought me a most charming letter and the remark that "my compositions were too good to be hidden under a bushel.' But I must wait until I have better judgment about setting down my ideas. Then I have a holy horror of finding, after they are given to the world at large, that they are borrowed thoughts. It seems to me I should die of humiliation and shame. . . . You remember I told you I was going to play for the *Cecilia* last Thursday evening. Well, I played, and this morning Mr. Lang told me I had done splendidly and that I had played much better MY first time, than did many of his 'brag' pupils. I feel a little encouraged by that. But, oh, how discouraged and tired I am of this continual practice, practice, practice, from morning to night; and think how many years it will be before I am able to play in an artistic manner. You have no idea how discouraged I am and how I hate myself almost for attempting a musical career, as it is nothing but expense and expense; but if I did not study music what would become of me? I should be utterly unfit for any other life. No, I have put my hand to the wheel, and with God's help I am going to be an artist, if I practice until my fingers are all worn away. I

took one of my compositions I had just finished to Mr. Lang this morning and while he was playing it he would say: 'Lovely, charming, lovely'—But somehow just now nothing encourages me. If I did not think it wrong I should say I am tired of life. . . . I have never before been troubled with sleeplessness, but can now sympathize with those who are in the same box. What do you suppose causes it? I don't drink tea or coffee and I try to get some exercise every day."

It seemed best to let these letters speak for themselves, so clearly they depict the young student's life, with its hopes and doubts and ambitions, its dark moments of discouragement and the long, long hours of unflinching work. From his diary of that period a more detailed history of his steady artistic development along the line (already well-defined) of his temperament might be written. There he notes scrupulously each day's work, his piano-practice, his composition, the concerts and operas he heard, the books he read, English and German—all his boyish adventures among the world's masterpieces. But it is in his letters home that (for those who knew him) Ethelbert seems to be alive and talking to them.

He returned to Vineacre in the Spring of 1883. With the exception of those early lessons in Pittsburg and his studies in Harmony with Mr. Emery, his only American instructor was Mr. Lang, of whom he always spoke with warm devotion and gratitude. The winter of 1883 and 1884 he passed in Pittsburg, occupied with teaching—his studio was at 36 Sixth St.—and with numerous concert engagements. Mr. Lang visited him there and at a recital in December, they played Saint-Saens' Concerto in G minor for two pianos. His most important concerts were those in which Mr. J. T. Irwin (violin), W. Ruhe (violoncello) and Mrs. J. Sharp McDonald took part. The newspaper critics praised highly his playing of Chopin. Of his compositions the "Serenade" with violin, 'cello and piano, was given, and at other concerts, "The Shepherdess," and "Thou Art Like Unto a Flower." His native city welcomed and

applauded him. He was twenty-one years old that November; he had won local fame as a pianist and he had published the little "Lilian Polka"—that boyish dance, written for his sister when he was "Bertie Nevin, aged eleven," (published by Knake, Pittsburg, 1874) and "Apple Blossoms" (his second composition) published by the same firm. "The Lovers," (*In the garden were leisurely walking*) bears the copyright date of 1881. It was published by John Church and Co. of Cincinnati with this title page:

TO BESSIE FLEMING, SEWICKLEY, PA.

THE LOVERS

SONG

(*Words by Clark W. Bryan*)

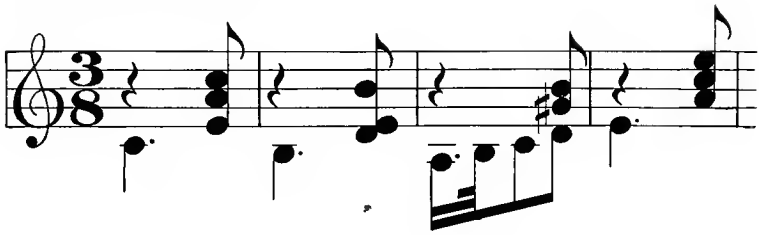
MUSIC BY "WOODBRIDGE"

Woodbridge was also the name—his second name—under which he had printed that earlier song (1880, Knake, Pittsburg) to which the boys and girls of that year danced many a night. This was "Apple Blossoms."

He had also many songs in manuscript which were sung in concerts but were not published until later. Among these were "The Milk Maid" and "Good-night, Good-night, Beloved" written during his second winter in Boston, and "I Once Had a Sweet Little Doll!"

CHAPTER THREE

"SERENADE"



CHAPTER THREE

"SERENADE"

THE years Nevin spent in Germany were of great importance. They influenced his entire life. They defined him as an artist. Perhaps the thought is not quite clear; what I would like to make plain is this: the years of work in Berlin developed but did not change his native genius. That youthful song, "Oh, That We Two Were Maying"—jotted down in the little exercise book he carried to school when he was a boy in Sewickley—had in it the germ of his perfect work, the germ of "Herbstgefühl" and "Maggio in Toscana." The years spent with Klindworth, Von Bülow, Bial gave him scholarship and mastery; they widened and perfected his means of musical expression; they gave him that easeful sense of accomplishment in which the great artist is victoriously himself; but they neither deflected nor changed the pure stream of his singularly personal genius. More than anyone—save perhaps Moussorgski, with whom he had spiritual kinship—he escaped the influences of his time, in which so many men of talent were overwhelmed. He was an ardent lover of Wagner, he expounded Wagner to audiences in Europe and America, he educated scores of Wagnerian singers; yet he was personally untouched by the Wagnerian mode; he was, as I have said, always victoriously himself. That is why his place in the history of music is a permanent one. His songs, born of an impulse at once personal and mysterious, have the eternal youth of the world's folk-songs. And his work, in its fullest musical florescence, preserved the simplicity, the unconsciousness, the power of complete expression, of the Anonymous Immortals who made the undying songs of the world; for like them he sang of elemental things—of love and birth and death.

That is why other composers had so little influence upon him, why he did not have a "first manner" and a "second manner" as

so many composers, who echoed and re-echoed various aesthetic masters of the hour. He never elaborated the *déjà fait.* The signature of all his works is unmistakable, from the crude sweet songs of his boyhood to the melodies, (strange, compelling, unexpected as the sounds of nature) and the harmonies and modulations of his latest compositions.

And so these years of study in Berlin were educational in the best sense of the word — they affirmed his personality.

Nevin had the faculty — rare among musicians — of putting down in words his impressions of people and things. It is in his own letters and diaries that the truest picture of his life, the life of a music student in the Germany of the last part of the nineteenth century, is to be found. It was never in his destiny to know the hardships and deceptions through which so many artists have made their way. In Berlin, as in Boston, his lines fell in pleasant places. His mother, in that beautiful sketch of his life from which I have already quoted, said of his arrival in Berlin:

> "There was not an acquaintance — not anyone to tell him where he should go, where he should live or what master he should choose, but the good angels have always hovered over him and he found himself drawn toward a *pension* in Berlin where lived good, kind Fräulein von Finck — a German lady of noble birth and loving heart. She could not speak a word of English, and he scarcely a word of German, but through an interpreter they soon made an agreement as to his living there with her. She very soon learned to know and love him, and she was ever after like a mother to him, taking charge of him and looking after him in the most kindly way. She soon began to teach him German and he taught her English."

Good angels hovered over him, his mother said. More than that his nature was essentially beautiful. The Editor of these leaves of biography was with him in Berlin in those days and memory holds an exact picture of the slim, bright youth, who whether sad or gay,

was always happy in the fine sense that life for him was love. It was love for his friends, love for the segment of humanity that touched him, love for art that gave him always the air of bright happiness. And in happiness there is an intrinsic force; it attracts; it influences beings and events as magnet does steel. Therefore, he was never alone; he was never anywhere a stranger. Wherever he went, in many lands, there gathered round him true and unchanging friendships.

He sailed for Europe the second time in August 1884. He spent ten days with friends in England, and reached Berlin late at night, August 30th, and put up at Meinhardt's Hotel. The next day was Sunday. He walked the city to and fro, heard "Der Freischütz" at the Opera House and, before going to bed, wrote in his diary, "I am completely fascinated with Berlin."

The fascination never died out. His first letter from Berlin, September third, was written to his brothers from "204 Friedrichstrasse," which was to be his home as a student and many times in after years.

> "My dear brothers," he wrote, "here I am at my journey's end and glad I am indeed that I shall soon be at work. I do not think that ever in my life I have experienced such a feeling of utter loneliness as I did when I arrived in this place. I rested Sunday, Monday and Tuesday and then started out to present my letters of introduction. Imagine my dismay on finding all the people to whom they were addressed away from Berlin. I was utterly bewildered and did not know what to do. I knew no one; had no boarding-house address and could scarcely speak the language. Then I decided to go to the bankers, Mendelssohn and Co., to see if by any possible chance there would be a letter for me. Imagine my surprise and delight to find one from Major Craig telling me he was in Berlin. I saw him immediately.
>
> "Next morning we started out on a hunt for a Pension. The first place was the house of a man (I, the only boarder) who has charge of concerts in Berlin and Leipsic and is the manager of Rubinstein, von Bülow and D'Albert. He is the brother of a man in the American Exchange and, thank Heaven, he knew the Nevin family through cousin Robert.

Unfortunately the terms were too high, so I started off to find another place. Now I am at the above address for which I am to pay a little less than five dollars a week, including everything from books up, with the privilege of practicing twenty-six hours a day, if I want to. I am absolutely obliged to speak German as Fräulein von Finck will not allow English spoken. In the house are six Germans, four Russians and a young lady from Honolulu. If Charlie comes and likes the place he will take the room connecting with mine and we will have a bed-room and one sitting-room between us."

Major Craig was a school-boy friend from Pittsburg who was then making the "grand tour" of Europe; he remained a few weeks in Berlin. The Charlie to whom he referred was Charles Woodruff Scovel, also of his home town, another close boyhood friend. He arrived in Berlin, Sunday, September 7th; and in the afternoon a third boyhood friend—the editor of this book—came up from the University of Jena to join the little American reunion at Fräulein von Finck's. There was much walking, much talking; there was a great deal of music, with afternoons at the Flora Symphony Concerts and evenings at the Opera House, at Kroll's—"a mean performance of 'Robert the Devil'"—or the Schauspielhaus. Then after ten days the friends parted—one to Jena; Major Craig back to Pittsburg, where his short, fine life ended; Scovel and Nevin settled down to their work—in diverse ways of law and music.

Craig, Nevin, Scovel, Thompson

He wrote to his mother September 15th:

"I did not have a chance to write my weekly letter, as Vance Thompson, Major Craig, Charlie Scovel and I were going all day. Our hostess (I can never look on her in the light of a landlady) is simply kindness itself. She lets nothing stand in the way of making us comfortable. I sit at her right at table, with a charming kind little Fräulein Willich on the other side of me. Fräulein Willich is a German teacher, and I am doing well with the language. How can I help it? I hear nothing but German all around me. Fräulein von Finck wants me to write to you and tell you not to be worried about me. This morning good little Fräulein Willich trotted me down to see Herr Professor Klindworth and on Wednesday I am to go and play for him. Shall take lessons from him till I find I need another master."

And a week later:

"I am in serious doubt as to studying with Klindworth; as in the *resumé* of classes I cannot find any that I exactly want. I am here to build up my technique and the question is, should I enter one of the upper classes where he prepares pupils for the concert stage? I can easily go there and not play any better than I do now, but I want to get a magnificent technique, and I don't feel I can get it that way. However, I shall play for him, tell him exactly what I want, ask his advice, and then do as I think best about it."

Then September 28th:

"Fräulein Willich yesterday sent word that Herr Professor Klindworth wanted me to come and play for him. She had been to his house to a birthday party and among the guests were von Bülow, Moszkowski, Scharwenka and Joachim. Of course I went in fear and trembling. The first thing he said was: 'Play me something,' so I played *Du bist die Ruh'*, which you used to like so much; and after I had finished he said 'A beautiful touch. Play me something

else.' So I played Chopin's *Berceuse,* after which he said: 'No Technique.' Then he gave me a long and interesting talk on piano playing and what was necessary to gain virtuosity. After which he said: 'By right you belong to the second class, where technique is made the chief object, but as you are so advanced in other respects, talented, I may say, I will take you into my artist class and give you individual instruction in technique.'

"So goes the world! And my heart sickens when I think of the weary hours I spent on these tedious exercises, for I thought my siege in Boston was enough for a lifetime. However, do it I will. I understand that at Klindworth's evenings are gathered some of the most interesting people in Berlin, critics, journalists, and artists of every description. I have been invited to attend some of these evenings. You know that Frau Klindworth is an English woman and particularly fond of English-speaking people. I am so well. Just as well as I can be. Write soon dear mother, your letters are almost my life. Love to all at home and oceans to your dear self.

"Your loving son,
"Ethelbert."

In October:

"At my last lesson with Herr Professor, he told me I did not know a thing about legato playing, and made me play the Weber Sonata and a Bach Fugue over and over again. Of course I was terribly discouraged. However, Herr Professor told Fräulein Willich that Herr Nevin had a great deal of talent and was bound to succeed in the end.

"My music is at times encouraging and at times so discouraging! The practice is tedious and tiresome. I don't think I would ever advise anyone to become a professional musician. Herr Professor is the most exacting of masters. I can never play a bar without being stopped and some corrections made. Of course it is just what I want, but it is disheartening and at times seems a hopeless task. But then—such music as I do hear! It is beyond imagination.

I believe the question has been agitated as to the advantages of coming to Germany to study music; as to whether one cannot gain just as much by studying at home? The whole subject is to me beyond argument. Such orchestras, such artists, such musicians, such operas—we never have had them and I almost think never CAN have. And it is not alone the study of the piano; but one becomes familiar with music in all its branches, and that cannot be done without hearing music and being thrown in a musical atmosphere. Even now I can see a great improvement in myself, especially in my improvisations. They are more finished, more rounded, worked out in a more musicianly way. I amuse them here very much by my improvisations and sometimes make them fairly roar, when I start off on some Bach-like invention, and gradually work round to a street air, at first indistinctly and then more prominently, until gradually it dawns on them what I am doing. Then I leave the piano amidst laughter and applause. However this does not make me an artist! At times I feel very discouraged."

And to his father:

"My mind goes at times like the wind, but at others at a snail's pace, and as I sit at the piano lifting my fingers up and down, with the most distressing monotony, I wonder after all, if I am doing right. Is it good for me to leave a home and parents who are so dear to me and stay away for such a long time? After all, is not a contented clerk equal to a discontented artist? I am spending much and making nothing. Well, I am trying hard to get the upper hand of the pianoforte. Herr Klindworth told a member of the Tuesday class that 'he had a pupil, a young American whose name was Nevin, who was one of the most talented fellows he had ever seen; that his compositions were something remarkable, but that he had No Technique, though working hard and sure to make a stir in the musical world.'

"On Monday morning I took some of my manuscript to Herr Tiersch[6] and he smiled and said: 'Too ambitious,

my boy, you must learn to spell before you can write a *Faust* or a *Du Bist wie eine Blume*. I tell you what you can do. Come to my home Mondays and Thursdays at six in the evening and stay till seven and I will give you a private lesson.'

"I took a piano lesson with his Majesty Herr Professor Klindworth today, and he said I was improving. At times though he is a hard task-master. I meet pupil after pupil, white with anger and tears streaming down their faces, as they come from their lessons. They say he is very good to me. If so, Heaven defend those others!"

Klindworth was indeed a hard task-master. Ere long Nevin was to have for him a reverence and affection both strong and lasting; but for the first few weeks Klindworth's hard manner rasped him like a file. He was not used to that kind of teaching. It was indeed the first time in his life he ever met with harsh insistence. In a long letter to his mother he tries to analyze his own feelings and the effect upon his work. His boyish philosophy has a charm of its own.

"When I was a child, or considerably younger than I am now," he wrote to his mother, "I worked not for the work itself, but because I found pleasure in pleasing someone and receiving a certain amount of praise from the one for whom I worked. Then to work well it was necessary for me in some degree to have affection for the person I was working for. Now it is entirely different and has opened to me a new train of thought. . . . Professor Klindworth has not a single trait in his personality I can find my heart leaning to. He is as unkind and as cruel as he can be; and instead of looking forward with pleasure to my lessons, as was my custom with Mr. Lang, I now dread the days as they come—so, of course, my work now is not spurred on by any affection. I believe that he is a most thorough musician and a man from whom I can learn very much—so I work for the sake of my music—to make myself a better musician. I get no praise and don't expect any, so all my encouragement is derived from myself, by finding that pas-

sages that used to be almost impossible for me to play are now very much easier. So on I work from day to day—not waiting to be told to correct such and such a fault but making myself my own teacher, and devising all sorts of exercises by which I can gain strength and technique. And I go to my lessons, play—am coldly criticised, told I can do nothing—and it has about the same effect water has on a duck's back for I come home, go to work again and can see daily improvement.

"It is an entirely new way of work for me; and probably it is the best thing in the world. Other pupils say Klindworth is fond of me. I am sorry, for as yet, I have nothing to give in return. I may change, as Emerson says a man is not worth anything unless his ideas and opinions are constantly changing. (By the bye, I wish you would read Emerson's Essays, they would help you in your thousand and one daily cares.)"

It was not long before the sensitive lad "changed" and found the heart under the harsh exterior; but for a while he thought of going to St. Petersburg to study with Tschaikowsky, or to Norway to study with Grieg. Meanwhile it was Klindworth's seeming unkindness—his throwing the youth back upon himself—that went far to make the artist. It was only a little later that his letters began to teem with praise of his master. He had learned to know him and had much "to give in return."

Berlin was then one of the pleasantest capitals in Europe. Through the spacious streets (not yet deformed by Art-Modern) imperialism went clanking. The war which had made the Empire was in every memory. The white-coated, long-sworded officers promenaded, haughty as the dogs of Caesar; at any street corner you might meet Bismarck; at any concert you might see old Moltke's lean face. Social life, though not so formal as now, was very brilliant. Nevin, who had rare social gifts, found every door open to him. He attended the Royal balls, where the Emperor led off the dance; the Ambassador's ball and many of the numerous dances and receptions given in

the American colony. His widest acquaintance was among German artists and composers—for that was the day of Rubinstein, Dvořak, of Joachim, and Von Bülow, of Scharwenka, D'Albert, Liebling, Pauer—many of whom he met and all of whom he studied so intently they became his unconscious masters.

PROFESSOR KARL KLINDWORTH

In April, Professor Klindworth insisted upon his taking a holiday for two weeks. His health was broken. Upon his return he wrote gaily enough to his mother, and with humorous anticipation of his lessons from the turbulent Von Bülow.

SERENADE

"*Friedrichstrasse 204.*,

"*April 12th 1885.*

"My dear Mother:

Last Monday I wrote a letter to you, but on Tuesday on reading it over, I came to the conclusion that it was really so morose and blue that I would not send it. Since then I have not had a moment's time for writing. Just think of it. I've been sick — did you ever hear of such a thing as my being sick in bed — it seems too absurd — and obliging Miss Castle to sit up with me. Why I can almost imagine the world's coming to an end as my being sick. It has been years and years; and just think what was the matter with me! Nervous prostration and chills brought on from overwork! Isn't that a magnificent and refined sort of disease? Why even fever is mild compared to the elegance of MY illness. The doctor didn't say, whether the nervous prostration or the chills were due to overwork — overwork! That sounds so pleasant — so wonderful, I would fain linger on the sweetness of its melody — overwork! I can imagine Bob laughing at that. But now wasn't it really nice, that if I were going to be sick it should be during my vacation? I have had no lessons for two weeks, nor have I been permitted to attend a concert. My piano has been closed and I have had to content myself with singing and reading — George Eliot's 'Romola' 'Clerical Life,' 'Mill on the Floss' and 'Middlemarch.' I think 'Dorothea' one of the most remarkable characters imaginable, and 'Rosamond' what a picture of a society woman — without society! How worthless after all is what we call a fine education which sends into the world a piece of perfection as regards manners, etiquette, appearance, dress and yet without the first feeling of sympathy for her husband in his great need. I hope you approve of my moral observations!

"Tomorrow I commence my lessons again and this 'Boffin's Bower' will resound once more with Brahms Hungarian variations. Von Bülow comes the first of May. Ye gods and little fishes how I tremble! What's the use in

being a 'best pupil' if another fellow, and a crazy fellow at that, comes along and fires a grand piano at your head. Now I approve of little musical idiosyncrasies, such as an innocent over-growth of hair; a desire to practice five-finger exercises on everybody's back; coats and trousers that belong to another generation, either past or future; such little trifles are very, very artistic and temperamental; but when they grow and develop into a fondness for throwing people out of windows, slamming busts of Beethoven at their heads, I think it is time the matter should be looked into, to determine if it is really in accordance with art after all. If so, I shall not be the one to gainsay it. By all means let us have tenth-story windows stand invitingly open and whole monuments of Beethoven flung with a precision of aim that even Solomon (no, I believe it was David who threw stones so well) could not outdo."

May the 6th, he wrote:

"Von Bülow is here, you know, and four mornings in the week from 8.30 to 12, I am in class, listening to Brahms, Liszt and Raff—sons of thunder! I think Von Bülow is as insane as a—well, well, I was going to say as a bug, but that isn't nice, so I won't say it. I haven't played for him but will before long."

When at last he did play for him, Von Bülow was taciturn. It went better a second time: "I didn't play very well," he said, and Von Bülow: "*Sehr schön*,—you have much to learn!"

May 28th, he played for Von Bülow the last time. And this was the verdict:

"Three or four times while I was playing, he said: 'Bravo! Bravo!' and when I had finished he told me I had '*ungeheueres Talent*,' and that was more than he said to any of the thirty-five pupils in the class."

Nevin played in public only once that first winter in Berlin. This was at the Klindworth concert in the *Sing Akademie*, and to his mother he wrote:

"I got there late and heard that Herr Professor had called for me to play. As I arrived he came to me and said: 'At last you are here. Now you must play.' I said I was ready. He seemed very nervous and whispered: 'Now do be careful. Don't get going too fast. Keep your head. Are you sure without your notes?' I said: 'Oh, yes.' Then he announced in a loud voice: 'Are you ready, Mr. Nevin?' He then took a stand in a corner where he could watch me. I started off at the top of the piano and played my double run of octaves with which the Schumann Allegro (Op. 8) opens, and the crescendo at the end was fine. I never played better in my life, and I forgot all about my audience. Herr Professor came rushing up to me, not a sign of a smile on his face, took my hand and said: '*Ganz gut, ganz gut*,' and not another word. When I sat down I trembled and shook. You good people don't understand what it is to throw for three or four minutes your whole soul, your heart, your passion, your love, your vitality, your very life into the ends of your fingers, or you would understand how used up I was. I know Herr Professor was delighted with my playing, for he said to Mr. Chickering: 'Did you hear my pupil, Nevin, play? He plays well; he is a young artist!'"

He played twice—perhaps oftener, for Professor Grimm. Of the first evening he wrote:

"Just fancy spending an evening in such company. I could hardly realize it as I sat in Miss Adams' carriage. The old fairy-tales came floating through my mind and I felt like the old woman whose dog did not know her: 'Can this be I?' They live quite plainly and he is a most pleasant old gentleman. Frau Grimm's mother was Goethe's 'Bettina.' Well, I played a great deal for them, and then we had supper."

When they were leaving Frau Grimm took his hand and thanked him for playing and said: "I believe they sewed velvet inside your fingers when you were a *Kindchen!*" and Herr Grimm shouted an "*auf baldiges Wiedersehen.*"

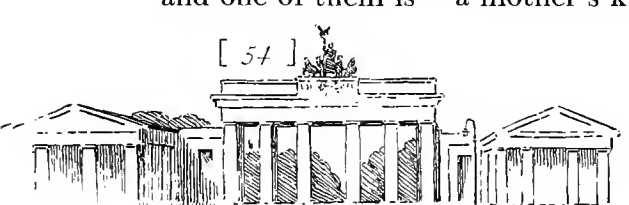
CHAPTER THREE

That winter Nevin worked steadily at the piano, his practice exceeding five hours a day. He studied theory with Carl Bial, but wrote nothing. None of his compositions date from this year. It had been, however, a year of definite achievement. And the strain had told upon him. In June he decided to go home for his health's sake.

> "I must get some color into my pale cheeks," he wrote, "music is hard, hard work and I am completely worn out. I shall be sorry to leave Fräulein Von Finck, but it will only be *auf Wiedersehen*!"

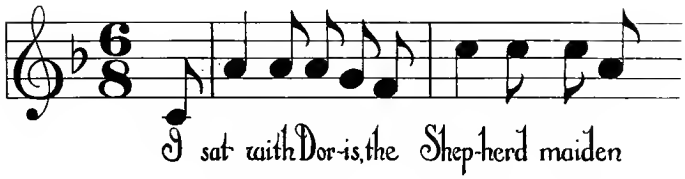
His home life in Berlin was very beautiful. Always the good angels, as his mother said, hovered over him. In a letter describing a brilliant birthday party given for him in the *Pension*—with much dining and dancing and gift-making—he tells of the gentle incident that closed the merry evening, thus:

> "After they had all gone, one of the maids came up to my room and said: 'Fräulein wants to know if you won't come down stairs a moment?' I went down and she asked me to sit on the stool by her side as she had something she wanted to tell me. So she took my head between her hands, and told me she hoped and prayed my many years would be *so* happy; and that the sun would shine into my life and make my way easy and my work pleasant; and she ended by saying: 'Now that you are far away from your mother, I will do for her what she would do,'—and mother, do you know she stooped and kissed me on the forehead. That was too much for me. The tears came to my eyes and I could hardly thank her, but I came up to my room and looked out into the wintry night, where the snow was falling everywhere, and I wished you could know how kind they all were to me, and how they tried to make me feel I was not a stranger in a strange land. So my birthday ended, and I went to bed, and this morning I found my pillow wet with tears. There are some things that can never be told—how much we appreciate them can never be put into words—and one of them is—a mother's kiss."



CHAPTER FOUR

"I SAT WITH DORIS, THE SHEPHERD MAIDEN"



CHAPTER FOUR

"I SAT WITH DORIS, THE SHEPHERD MAIDEN"

THE summer of 1885—from July until mid-September—Nevin spent at Vineacre. He did not play in public and although he gave piano-lessons to one or two of his former pupils, the days were chiefly spent in riding, tennis and the pleasant social life of the Sewickley Valley. The first week in October he was back again in the Pension at Berlin, his health quite restored, and keen to begin the year's work.

"I had such a kind reception from Professor Klindworth and ever so many congratulations on my engagement to Anne," he wrote. This betrothal, which, more than anything else, gave form and color to his life—which was indeed its dominant influence—was made during those summer days at Vineacre. Anne Paul was a daughter of J. W. Paul of Pittsburg. The families had been intimate for years; from childhood the boy and girl had known each other. Their love was that rare love which is at once first love and last love.

(Of the many, many letters he wrote her in the years few will be published here. They were full of the glory of youth and love. They told the artistic and spiritual struggles of his young manhood; they recorded the biography of his soul—a biography to be read, he thought, only by the one who lived with him that life of the mind and of the spirit. Shortly before his death he and his wife destroyed these letters—all save a few—by fire.)

So he was once more in Berlin, "battling to keep his loneliness away" and his heart often "faint with longing" for the green, home-valley over sea; and working daily in the old hard way at the piano. He began to take, also, private lessons from Carl Bial[8]—"He is enthusiastic and that is everything for me, as he throws some of that same atmosphere into my musical lungs, as it were." Meanwhile

he heard Rubinstein's famous series of concerts in which were played the compositions of the great masters from Rameau down to the then extremely modern Russians, César Cui, Balakirew, Rimsky-Korsakov — "a whole musical training in itself," he wrote, "and you can have no idea of what inestimable value it is to me."

His master of composition and harmony, Carl Bial, praised a few songs Nevin showed him, very highly. "Don't publish yet," he said; and gave him a sonata to write. It was "fascinating work" and more and more, as the weeks went by, he gave himself to this study, though he still fancied his future work was to be that of a piano-virtuoso. This ambition died slowly. Every morning he gave four hours to piano practice. Usually he added to them an hour or two in the afternoon. Withal there was time for that social life, which in the Berlin of that day was so essentially a musical and artistic life. Through his letters and his diary runs a wistful note of homesickness. So much of his heart he had left behind him; and his closest American friends had gone away from Berlin. Then there was a sudden change from gray to rose.

Christmastide that year had all its true German gaiety and *Gemüthlichkeit;* and a little of it is reflected in one of his home letters:

"*Berlin*

"*December 28th, 1885.*

"My dear Mother:

Imagine my surprise and delight when on Wednesday morning my lovely flag came. Oh, but it is beautiful, and everyone in the pension has envied me. I have it draped over a picture and a portiere, and it brightens my whole room. I was so much obliged to you, as I know it took a great deal of work. My sofa—which at night is my bed—is right under it, so I sleep with the stars and stripes above me. Is it not the loveliest flag in the world?

"Last week was quite a week of dissipation, I can assure you. On Monday Frau Engelhardt gave a large supper and ball. As with most German parties the first part

of the evening was rather tedious. But after we were seated at our respective tables and we knew exactly what we were expected to do, things went along very comfortably. After supper the cunning little officers all twittered together in one corner and put on their white gloves. Then the music commenced, and we American men walked up and took off all the girls, so the little chaps in uniform retreated disgustedly to their corner, just like so many girls at their very first party. One funny thing happened. I was talking to Miss Bateman (who is a decidedly stunning-looking girl) when up popped a little officer, clacked his spurs together, counted four, made his bow and said to me: 'My name is von Bernhut.' I smiled, bowed and said: 'My name is Nevin. I'm glad to know you. I'll see you later.' Then Miss Bateman and I went off. I believe when a man wants to be presented to a young lady, he introduces himself to a gentleman who knows her and that gentleman is expected to present him. I rather startled several young officers that evening by replying: 'Just wait till I see if it will be agreeable to the lady.' No wonder they started. Such a thing as a German girl NOT wanting to meet a German officer has never been chronicled in the annals of German society.

"On Thursday evening we had a rehearsal for our 'Mother Goose' Quadrille. Everything went along nicely and we had quite a jolly time. On Wednesday, Elbert and I went out to make a few Christmas purchases, and in the evening we had a dress rehearsal of our dance. We went through it four times, and were all pretty much used up. On Thursday, we were busy all morning, and in the afternoon we — Miss Waters, Miss Bateman, Mrs. Dickson, Elbert, Faye and I — trimmed the Christmas tree. It was really quite pretty, and in the evening, at seven-thirty, I went in and lighted it up from top to bottom; then the door was opened and they all came in singing '*Tannenbaum*' — then 'Holy Night.'

"Fräulein received lots and lots of presents — such lovely ones, too. Elbert and I gave her half a dozen Royal Berlin china cups and saucers. They were really little gems. I got

a ring from Fräulein for my piano, a paper knife from Miss Castle — then with your flag and a Christmas card from Charlie I think I fared pretty well.

"On Friday, Christmas day, I practiced and took a short walk. In the evening we dressed ourselves, spruce and fine, in our 'Mother Goose' costumes and went off to Herr Professor Klindworth's. Imagine his surprise when sixteen of us to the tune of 'Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary' came dancing in. Miss Waters and I as 'Where are you going, my pretty maid?' and 'Willy Boy' led the march. Then came 'Bobbie Shafto' and 'Miss Muffet,' 'King Cole,' 'Queen of Hearts,' 'Boy Blue,' 'Mary, Mary,' 'Knave of Hearts,' 'Bo-Peep,' 'Jack and Jill,' 'Betsy Brooks and Tommy Snooks' and finally 'Mother Goose and her son, Jack.'

"We really had a lovely evening, and everyone was so much pleased with the dance we had to repeat it. Then Herr Professor even wanted it again.

"We had great fun under the mistletoe, too, and Herr Professor actually kissed me on the cheek! He made me sit by him with Miss Waters at table and was so good and kind to me. Once during the evening he came up and said, 'Nevin, I want to compliment you on your legs — you could make money as a model.' I was dressed in a red cashmere shirt, a blouse, with black lisle-thread stockings and trowsers of black tricot, coming just above the knee. I wore a little red cashmere cap, the point falling down on my shoulder with a little bell at the end. Everyone said I exactly looked the part and Fräulein declared she was so proud of me she did not know what to do.

"Again during the evening when Herr Professor and I were sitting on the floor in a corner, he with his arm about me, and some of the others clustered round, he said, 'Life is made up of poetry and truth — this evening is poetry — truth we must all seek.' It does not sound nearly so beautiful in English as it did in German. Miss Waters says Herr Professor is really very proud of me."

Then one morning he was awakened at three A. M. by a cable-

ANNE PAUL
Mrs. Ethelbert Nevin

gram announcing that "Anne and Nell were coming to Germany." Sitting by the window he wrote a song — what love-song he did not state in his diary — and took it with him when he went to Carl Bial for his lesson that day. After going over it, the Professor said: "This is a song in ten thousand!" In a letter to his mother Nevin quoted these words (for he knew her pleasure in all that spoke of his advancement) and added: "I take more delight in compliments arising from my compositions than in anything else, as they are part of me — of my very soul!" At the same time he notes in his diary: "Am at work on 'Doris,' which I conceived some years ago as a tenor solo. I am now working it out for a tenor solo, male chorus and orchestra. My first attempt at orchestral writing."

Miss Anne Paul and her sister, Miss Nellie Paul, spent the winter in Berlin.

So far as music was concerned Nevin described those months as made up of "concert after concert, opera after opera, lesson after lesson, and work and work." What seemed to have impressed him most was the Bach Saint Mathew Music given at the *Sing Akademie* — that and the piano-playing of Eugen d'Albert, who was, for him, the greatest living pianist. Of the performance at the *Sing Akademie*, he wrote in a strain of religious enthusiasm:

> "I don't think I have ever been impressed with or by anything so much as the Passion Music, as it was given on Friday. Such chorals, such tearful yet overpoweringly dignified melodies, such a conception of the greatest life ever lived and death ever suffered, is grand beyond all words; and no one but Bach could have given it the majestic, yet pathetic portrayal. It is a subject that mere melody will not define — mere harmony cannot reveal. One must have that foundation of massive rock, yet a warmth and tenderness with it. Other composers handling the subject would make it either sentimental, sensational or sensuous. I don't even except Wagner or Beethoven. Glorious Bach! What that man has done for religion in his Chorals and his Passion Music no one can estimate."

His friendship with Klindworth — that "tyrant" whom he dreaded so at first — became very close and fine; one day:

> "Herr Professor Klindworth and I went to Dresden together to hear the *Götterdämmerung*. Fancy the honor in being taken by him to hear the greatest opera in existence! He was so good and kind to me, and I never was so swell. He sent his card and when we reached the Opera House we found a box reserved for us (Herr Professor Klindworth and Herr Ethelbert Nevin) next to the King's; and that; of course, necessitated a great deal of formality. I stood at the door until His Majesty entered, then I sat at his left and people round and about rose and stood until he was seated; then bows were exchanged and between acts our box was the centre of Dukes, Counts, Countesses — more than I have ever seen together. After the opera there was a liveried servant to conduct us to the stage where I met Gudehus and Fräulein Malten (whom we heard so often) and saw all the stage arrangements. We left Dresden at 3.45 A. M. and reached Berlin in time for breakfast. Anne was as delighted as I was at my going with Herr Professor and consequently both our heads are held a few inches higher. He was as jolly and nice as could be, and we carried on our conversation in English, German and French — which by the way I speak better than I do German."

And there were other excursions. He describes charmingly one adventure in May:

> "Last Saturday Fräulein von Finck, Anne, Nell, Elbert, Mr. Adriance, Mr. Holmes and I went to the Spreewald to spend Sunday. We took the train from the *Goerlitzer-Bahnhof*, and after a two and a half hours' ride we came to Lübbenau, where we popped off bag and baggage. A walk of twenty minutes brought us to the *Gast-Hof* of the Black Eagle, where we inquired if we could obtain a boat and a boatman to take us to Burg. We said we should like, if possible, a fine old fellow with side-whiskers, sprinkled with enough gray to give us at least an idea that he might be trustworthy. Well, we found him and he seemed anxious

to take us. While he was making ready his boat, we all trotted off to a bewitching little garden on the banks of one of the thousand little canals that net-work the Spree-wald, and there in an arbor of woodbine round a rustic table, had a piece of *Butter-brot* and a glass of beer. We men were obliged, however, to keep up a constant puff of smoke, the mosquitoes were so thick; and soon Fräulein and the girls threatened to indulge, but did not. After half an hour's enjoyment of the pretty garden, the arbor, the mosquitoes, the cheese and the beer, our friend of the Black Eagle announced to us that our boat was in readiness. We packed dear old Elbert in the bow, Fräulein and Anne in the first seat, Nell and Adriance in the second and Holmes and I in the rear.

"Well, the trip was the most romantic thing I have ever seen. Mile after mile along these natural canals, passing at a snail's pace old tumble-down cottages, old mills, old women and old men. Here they were weeding flax, here washing linen. Some were making butter, others knitting on the doorsteps. Then from ever so many cottages, some little girl with her bright red petticoat, her little blue bodice, and her white head-gear, would run alongside of the canal and toss a bunch of poppies, for-get-me-nots, fleur-de-lys and *Kaiser-blumen* into our boat. On we crept slowly, quietly, dreamily until twilight came and the first little stars peeped out to see what the world was going to do that night. Then we met boat-load after boat-load, gliding down some little stream, all garlanded and festooned with greens and flowers; some singing and laughing, and throwing flowers; all dressed in their Sunday best, with bright petticoats of every conceivable shade and color and spotless white head-gear, all on their way to a dance. In the distance we heard a band softly playing and as we drew near we saw, in a dense grove, fifty or more of those brilliant short skirts swung round by tall, manly fellows in knee-breeches, over the grass, to a waltz; and all shouting '*Guten Tag*' to us. On, on we glided down the little stream and twilight crept into night's embrace and the stars twinkled and winked and

snapped, and the trees grew bold against the sky. Finally after passing by an old mill that looked like some gaunt bird, our boatman pulled up at a dark little nook and told us to get out. Alas! the good man had been indulging in *Schnapps* at a farmhouse and was so tipsy he could take us no further. He landed us at a forlorn-looking old house at 10.30 P. M. and we were about as disconcerted and bewildered a party of merrymakers as any you have ever seen. In dismay Fräulein and I went to the window of the house and rapped on the small panes of glass, and when an old night-capped woman appeared we asked her if she could not send someone to guide us to Panke's Inn, where we wanted to rest all night. She sent one of her sons, a burly young fellow about my age, but ten times as strong and manly as I am, and he took the lead, with us seven following, in momentary expectation of being run into, or falling into the canal. We went on and on through the darkest of woods, over rickety tumble-down bridges, crossing first one canal, then another, until finally we were landed safely at Panke's. Mine host welcomed us and tried hard to make us comfortable, and after we were all snuggled in between feather-beds, we began to feel at our ease and went to sleep.

"The next day was a perfect dream. The costumes, the quaint people, the curious old houses and the picturesque little rivers made us all feel as though we were in a world that no one had ever been in before, our alligator travelling bags and cut-glass toilet-bottles notwithstanding. The girls found rich old china which they bought for a few marks; and we men made friends with the young chaps and kissed the pretty little Gretchens and Lischens, and altogether the morning was delightful. At two o'clock we were in our boat again ready for our trip home to Lübbenau All went well until about six in the evening, when the clouds commenced to darken and in a few moments we were in the midst of a downpour that threatened to drench us to the skin. We called a halt at an old tavern where we were welcomed by an abnominable band. There in the kitchen we got a cup of coffee, a nip of brandy, a piece of

cake and fresh straw for our boat. Then off we went again. We landed at Lübbenau hungry and happy. After a good dinner, the best of the town's best, we retired and in the morning at four-thirty we were on our train. At nine I was at my piano and so ended our ideal trip to the Spreewald."

In June he took his examinations at the Klindworth school. His reference to them is in a letter to his mother, the greater part of which I cannot resist quoting. He had just heard of the death of his Uncle Williamson—that is, of the Rev. Dr. John Williamson Nevin, his father's eldest brother, and he wrote:

"What a glorious life he has lived, and how we all honor his name and respect his memory! I can recollect a long time ago, when I suppose I must have been a bit of a boy, clinging to your skirts, of your having shown me his picture and having told me that he was a wonderful man, and that I must respect and love him. I have always respected him and looked up to him and made him my ideal, and I only regret that I have not been near enough to have learned to know him better. Isn't this life of ours a strange, strange thing? How we live to learn and after all how little we know and how much we have to take on faith! We come into this lovely world and for a few years we are between a flower and a fruit. We grow, blossom, and our lives are as pleasant as a day in June. Then come our first little trials, our first loves and our first awakening to the tremendous fact that we live and breathe and are, in ourselves, a being. And after more years of happiness, in which we are content to be ignorant, comes that thirst for knowing and to be known. Thereon we live, work, are strong, weak, happy or sad. Bitter experience comes and suddenly our eyes are opened to the fact that there are innumerable little clouds that we had never noticed before. And if we continue to gaze and gaze at them, they grow and grow until we could almost believe there was no sun. Oh, if we could only see a little farther! We become subject to our egoism and we are not willing to have faith and believe! We want to know—to

find out for ourselves. Well, perhaps this is best, just as in the Springtime we scrape the old brown leaves away to try to find the little pink bud — Arbutus. Why is it that it is always so very lovely and so very sweet? I often wonder if it is not that it has to be sought for. If it bloomed by the doorstep, would it be as beautiful? Would its fragrance be as sweet?

"But oh, after all, what can be a greater blessing than to be born into this lovely world — to see the trees, the flowers, to be near those we love, to be able to work, to study, to grow, always seeing the road become clearer? Then the keen joy of battling with and conquering self; the still greater joy of conferring happiness upon another. Yes, love rules the world — with a sunbeam, not with a thunderbolt. If we could only take more things on faith! Our religion — why can we not take our religion entirely on faith? What thought can be more beautiful than this? We can't expect to know everything. So let us have faith — faith in our father, our mother, our brother, our sister, and our God. Let us all seek the sunshine, not without, but within, and trust the rest to One who loves us and who knows what is best. If our lives can be like Uncle Williamson's, so much the better. If not — if we have had our temptations, if we have fallen by the way — well, we have done the best we could; and though we are only a background, we are a necessity to the completion and perfection of a picture. . .

"On next Friday your son, E. W. Nevin, takes his degree — the first American who has done it, and the first and only pupil in the school who has taken a three years' course in two. My 'degree' sends me off to make my way in the great musical world. My success depends solely upon what I can do. On Friday we all say goodbye to our dear Professor and to one another and then commences our battle. I'm not afraid of mine, as my armor seems as stout as the next fellow's and I love my work."

In composition he came off with flying colors. The examination in piano playing was held the succeeding day and Klindworth told him he played better than he had ever done. The winter's work was over.

CHAPTER FOUR

Professor Klindworth and his wife wanted Nevin to spend the summer with them at their country-seat, but he had other plans. Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Paul had come abroad to join their daughters, Anne and Nell; and a party was made up for a tour, the objective point being Bayreuth.

July 22nd, Nevin wrote:

> "Here I am in classic old Weimar. Mr. Paul insisted on my coming with them, and Harry Adriance and I, with the girls and Mr. and Mrs. Paul, make quite a jolly party. I decided to come one day and was ready the next."

Then it was Heidelberg where:

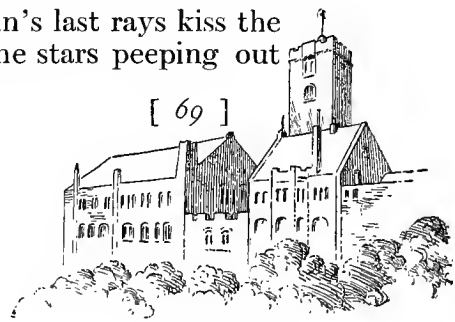
> "The old *Schloss* is the same with the rather deteriorating exception of a great many pine boards resting there to make ready for the *Jubiläum Fest*, celebrating the five hundredth anniversary of the University. The castle is to be illuminated and the city one mass of flying colors from the second of August to the eighth. Almost every room in the town has been rented for the *Fest*-week and, with the exception of a desire to see the show, I am very glad I am not going to be here. I detest crowds. This afternoon, Anne, Harry Adriance and I took a walk up to the *Wolf's Brunnen* and on our way found the most exquisite ferns. Lots and lots of students with their gay-colored caps passed us and we saw many freshly cut scars, which not only marred their faces (recalling foolhardy duels) but the sublimity of the hills and the romantic Neckar flowing two hundred feet below. I don't wonder Lessing grew enthusiastic over Heidelberg. It has the very atmosphere of antiquity and almost a musty smell.
>
> "This evening, after supper, we sat on the lovely terrace of the hotel, with Heidelberg lying beneath us and the street lamps glittering as if making fun of the stars that were doing it ever so much better high above our heads. We sang some good old hymns, that we are as familiar with as we are with our own names; and Mr. Paul told us of the campaign of Polk, and Father's celebrated Glee. He

seems to think I couldn't possibly write anything better than that, and after expatiating on its merits for half an hour, we separated; and Harry and I are sitting in the lovely little French window of our apartment, one on either side of the table, sending letters to our homes, both of us wishing all those so near and dear to us could be here.

"Yesterday we spent in Eisenach and visited the glorious Wartburg, where the Landgraves of Thuringia had their courts of poetry, music, and merry-making; where Tännhauser was lured away by Venus and where Elizabeth waited and watched for his coming, and finally watched and waited until death came. Wagner grows more wonderful to me every day. His hand never degrades a subject or a place. He gives it dignity and romance. Would that every artist did the same! While we were in Eisenach, we went to the house in which John Sebastian Bach was born, and Anne insisted on seeing the very room. After a good many pleadings (and her own pretty face) the old lady in charge let us go upstairs. She took such a fancy to Anne, and gave her some flowers from Bach's garden, which Anne has pressed and put in her flower-book; and I have set down a part of one of his Fugues on the same page. At the Wartburg, Anne bought a wooden beer mug; on the inside of the lid Harry sketched the castle and I am to decorate the outside with Martin Luther's *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott*. She keeps us all pretty lively, always on the go, and she is a splendid traveller, only she talks too much to the guides. But in the end I suppose she will know more than all of us put together. Her German and French are positively remarkable."

Then it was Bayreuth and he wrote:

"Just think, Wagner's home, Wagner's operas and Wagner's grave! Oh, what wouldn't I have given if you could have been with Elbert and me as we wandered up the hill to the Opera House in the woods! As we stood on the uppermost terrace and watched the sun's last rays kiss the sleepy little town of Bayreuth; and the stars peeping out



here and there, like little motives in the prelude, telling us that the sublime moon was coming!

"I have never in my life been more impressed than I was by the three performances I heard at the Wagner Temple. On Monday we heard 'Parsifal,' Wagner's last and, to my mind, his weakest opera, with the exception, maybe, of 'Rienzi' and 'Lohengrin'—perhaps 'The Flying Dutchman,' too. The scenic effects are really more than one can imagine, although probably not as great as in the 'Götterdämmerung.' The procession of Amfortas and the walk of Parsifal in the first act, as well as some startling effects in the second, are fine—wonderfully so. I fancy you would have enjoyed 'Parsifal' more than anything you had ever seen, and I hope some day you will see it. But—oh! the joy—the positively maddening joy I had in hearing 'Tristan and Isolde!' That is something beyond anything mortal can imagine. If you could but hear Rosa Sucher and Gudehus just after they have taken the love-potion say to *each other*—'Tristan'—'Isolde'—No, I can't even write about it. I think three more performances, such as I heard last Thursday would really drive me insane. I don't know whether it would be even right for me to hear them again."

From Bayreuth the party went to Carlsbad and thence to Dresden for "Siegfried" and the "Götterdämmerung," returning to Berlin the end of August, where Fräulein "with her dear smiling face" was waiting to greet them. At the Pension von Finck this autumn there was quite a gathering of the Nevin clan, aunts and girl cousins from over sea.

"When I hear the girls' voices in the corridor," he wrote, "I think I must be surely dreaming and am fairly tempted to pinch myself to see if I am Bert Nevin or someone else. You can imagine how happy I am to have part of my kin here."

Mr. and Mrs. Paul sailed for the United States, but Miss Anne

Paul and her sister Nell remained, studying German. Those were the brightest of all Ethelbert Nevin's student days. The work went on apace, too. He realized that his purely educational days were drawing to an end. What he worked hardest at was getting his concert programmes in order for the winter season. It seemed, even then, that his future was to be that of a public piano player and he faced it with apprehension; he told his father:

> "You can have no idea how I dread this coming winter, when I am to be out before the world to be picked at and to be knocked about. I try hard to be brave and to think seriously how important it really is to be worldly and active and bright, to be a success, and to lead a successful life, but I dread it all. Anne, with her kind sympathy helps me very much, and her help—close to me all my life—I am sure will be the one aid towards my success."

Professor Klindworth urged him to make his *début*, as a piano virtuoso, in Berlin. It would have cost a couple of thousand marks and after much hesitation he decided against it. His chief reason was that his future work was to be in America:

> "I am disappointed, of course, but then one can't have everything and my ambition now is to get on my feet financially; but it will be a tough pull."

And a tough pull it was, for many years. Ethelbert Nevin was one of the few composers—of those who never wrote for the stage, of those who never for one instant sacrificed art to the outer contingencies of life—he was one of the few, I say, who found early fame. And yet it was long before he reaped the rewards of his work; his struggle lasted throughout his brief and intense life.

In mid-November, 1886, Nevin sailed for New York, after a little more than two years' assiduous work with Klindworth and Bial. He had been, also, one of Von Bülow's four chosen pupils; his work in composition with Tiersch had borne fruit; but it was Klindworth who most greatly influenced him; and in later days Nevin said:

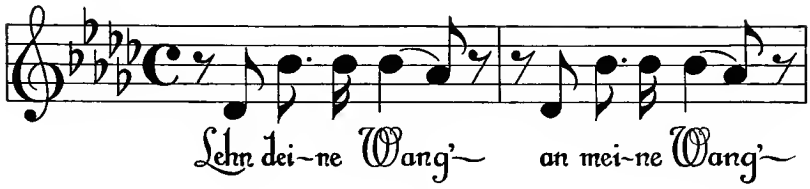
CHAPTER FOUR

> "To Herr Klindworth I owe everything that has come to me in my musical life. He was a devoted teacher and his patience was tireless. His endeavor was not only to develop the student from a musical standpoint, but to enlarge his soul in every way. To do this he tried to teach one to appreciate and to feel the influence of such great minds of literature as Gœthe, Schiller and Shakespeare. He used to insist that a man does not become a musician by practicing so many hours a day at the piano, but by absorbing an influence from all the arts and all the interests of life, from architecture, painting and even politics."

In these years, Nevin had attained a fine mastery of his chosen instrument, the piano. He had acquired—to use Wagner's phrase—that independence and liberty which come from mastery of musical form. In his youthful compositions of this Berlin period there was the germ of all his work—the dominant quality of sincerity, of spontaneity, of sentiment, at once profound and delicate—the lyric charm which was so essentially his own.

CHAPTER FIVE

"LEHN' DEINE WANG'"



CHAPTER FIVE

"LEHN' DEINE WANG"

ETHELBERT NEVIN made his *début* as a pianist at a recital given in Pittsburg, December 10, 1886. He was ill when he went on the platform. Indeed, since his return from Europe he had been in ill-health and had cancelled many engagements, notably one to play in New York. In spite of this he achieved a brilliant success. The enthusiasm of the newspaper press was not unmixed with local pride, but the criticisms show that his personal quality as a pianist was already clearly defined. One critic in the *Commercial Gazette* wrote:

"Two years' study abroad has wrought a marked change in the young pianist's style of playing. The striking characteristics of his performance are intense poetic feeling, exquisite refinement in shading, and marvellous delicacy of touch. The Bach Fugue in A minor tested his technique thoroughly, and, although there was a slight unevenness to be observed in occasional passages, he was generally equal to the stupendous technical difficulties of the composition.

"In the Schumann Fantasie (C major) his conception was marked by intelligence and poetic feeling, but in the execution he lacked somewhat in that massiveness and thrilling power which one naturally expects in the grand climaxes of this work.

"His rendition of Brassin's Nocturne was a triumphant effort. It was the piece in which his best qualities were displayed. The delicacy with which he managed the variations for the right hand while carrying the theme with the left was truly remarkable. The 'Legend of the Spinner,' a composition of his own, was a showy piece, in which the composer seems to have discarded all musical form and given full rein to his fancy, not, however, necessarily to the detriment of the composition.

"The A minor Étude of Chopin was admirably rendered, as was

also the pianist's own transcription of Wagner's 'Rhine Daughters' Trio.' Brassin's transcription of the 'Fire Charm' (Walkyrie) which followed was given with the same refinement of shading and delicacy of touch noticeable in the rendition of the Nocturne. Liszt's Tarantelle, 'Venezia e Napoli,' was played with rare brilliancy and was a fitting close to the evening's entertainment."

The music critic of the *Pittsburg Times* said:

"The programme last night, with the exception of a study of Bach's and two of Chopin's Études, was typical of the poetic-classic school. In Schumann's C major Fantasie, the faculty of vivid interpretation was displayed and the fine coloring in which it abounds was reproduced with absolute fidelity. A Nocturne of Brassin's was rendered with surpassing delicacy, and a fine dramatic climax was reached in the transcriptions from Wagner's 'Götterdämmerung' and 'Walkyrie.' The stock recital number, Liszt's 'Venezia e Napoli,' with its musical antithesis and florid coloring, was the last number on the programme and was performed in a manner not excelled by any artist ever yet heard in this city. The 'Legend of the Spinner,' an original composition of Mr. Nevin's, opens with a simple theme of four measures on which is constructed a series of skilfully elaborated variations, which were played with delightful crispness and delicacy. An original transcription of Wagner's 'Rhine Daughters' Trio' was equally meritorious, both as regards structure and execution.

"Without going into detail and enumerating the many characteristics of a piano virtuoso, Mr. Nevin may unhesitatingly be pronounced a fully equipped and masterly performer. He has cultivated the best traits of the great masters under whom he studied, and adds to the experience thus gained an originality which is the only remaining essential to genius. That his genius is of a high order was the universal verdict of the many competent judges by whom he was heard last evening."

So the recital was a great success; but Nevin felt that there was,

in the approbation of his fellow-townsmen, a little of that local, uncritical patriotism which is so pleasant to the young artist—and so fatal to him. His public career in Pittsburg might have been easeful and not without profit; but Nevin wished to be measured by a higher—at least by a less familiar—standard.

He decided to begin his professional career, as pianist and teacher, in Boston. Shortly after the mid-winter holidays he wrote from that city to his father:

> "Now that I have things pretty much arranged I want to tell you of my prospects. As yet I have none, as far as pupils are concerned, but I think that will come later. Mr. Lang is wonderfully kind to me and *entre nous* I think I shall play the Liszt E flat minor with orchestra inside a very few weeks, Mr. Lang conducting; and the concert will not cost me a cent. Isn't that splendid? He has been a faithful friend. He spoke to Liszt about me and told him I was coming to him, and that was just a few days before Liszt died. Mr. Lang will be of great help to me I am sure, if he finds I am willing to work. Just now it is a little up-hill work but I think— no, I MUST succeed! I have engaged rooms at 14 Mount Vernon Street, where all mail must be sent. The rooms are comfortable enough and I shall be contented. Mr. Smith, the head man at Chickering's, was at Mr. Lang's when I called this morning, and Mr. Lang said:
>
> " 'Mr. Smith, you must know the young man we've been waiting and watching for and talking about. Be good to him; and do what you can to help him.' I then went down to see about pianos and Mr. Smith rented me a fine new concert grand for the absurd sum of $18.00 a quarter. You can see how he has favored me for they never rent new grands, and even for one that has been *used*, charge not less than $45 to $50 a quarter. Of course it's business on both sides—still, business is business. He took me all over the house and made me feel quite at home.
>
> "I called on Arthur Foote, of whom I spoke some time ago. He was as cordial as could be. I am going round soon

to meet his wife and babe. He is the most promising of the rising musicians and I'm getting in with the best. My apartments on Mt. Vernon St. are in the swell part of the town—Beacon Hill—nicest sort of people there and altogether things look promising. You can have no idea how badly I feel to think how I have flown the home nest; and at times an inexpressible longing comes over me to be at the fireside with all my loved ones. I suppose every young man goes through that phase, but I'm sure it's going to make a stronger and better man of me. Only keep my place for me at home, as you can have no idea how I love that place and how often I think of it."

Excerpts from the two succeeding letters illustrate his April moods—the brightness and gloom of a temperament essentially artistic—the swift passing from tears to laughter:

"Here I am all settled in my new apartments with so much to do and still not able to do anything, for I find I shall have to move again, as the lady who has the suite above me, does not like so much music. Mr. Howe, the gentleman from whom I engaged these rooms, is really very pleasant, and I am to move into another of his houses just back of this and as good luck would have it the rooms—two and a bath—are really a hundred per cent more agreeable for me and cost less. Isn't that good? This suite is too large for me; and it is not so bright and sunny. So after Thursday, address me No. 5 Mount Vernon Place. . .

"I have just had the pleasure of cutting my finger and receiving a visit from the lady who 'doesn't want so much music.' She was very nice though, and I played for her, so we parted good friends after all. She said she was very sorry to inconvenience me and all that sort of thing. You can have no idea how lonely I am. I've just had a real good 'weep' all to myself in my new rooms."

And then a few days later:

"I'm as happy as can be! I feel very much ashamed that I should have sent such a gloomy letter home and really,

now that I am busy at work, I'm happier than I've been for months and a hundred per cent better. I've been making the most delightful acquaintances and my rooms are as pretty as can be.

"Yesterday afternoon I was busy sewing rings on curtains, when the maid came in with a large basket of oranges and roses. I looked at the card and it was from 'mine enemy,' the lady who had the suite above mine at Number 14, and who 'didn't like so much of my music.' The flowers came from her greenhouse and the oranges her father had sent up from Florida. Wasn't that kind of her? We've become very good friends and she says she *misses my playing so much!*"

In March he appeared at the second of Mr. Lang's concerts in Chickering Hall, playing the Liszt Concerto in E flat major, with orchestra. His health had greatly improved and he faced his audience with unusual confidence—indeed all the critics spoke of the strength and exuberant vigor of his work. These were not the rarest qualities of his piano playing and his artistry was not clearly apparent until he gave a piano recital a few days later. However, his success was considerable.

The Evening Transcript said: "That he is already an artist of great and rare gifts was plainly manifest." And Philip Hale wrote: "He has great fullness of tone unmarred by harshness, and with reflection and time ought to have a worthy and high place."

The recital was given March 11th; again, it is Philip Hale who gives the best account of the young pianist's *début* and the most illuminative comment upon the five Nevin songs, which formed part of the programme. These songs were still in manuscript.

Mr. Hale's article—a contemporary judgment passed upon the artist—is quoted in full:

"Mr. Ethelbert Nevin, assisted by Miss Jennie von Holz, gave a pianoforte recital in Chickering Hall last evening of which the following was the program:

CHAPTER FIVE

PIANO SOLO

Fugue in A minor	BACH
Fantasie in C, Op. 17 (TWO MOVEMENTS)	SCHUMANN

SONGS

Arietta, 'No so piu, cosa son'	MOZART
'Quando a te lieta'	GOUNOD

PIANO SOLO

Nocturne	BRASSIN
Study in A minor, Op. 25	CHOPIN
Romance, Op. 5	TSCHAIKOWSKY
Allegro, Op. 8	SCHUMANN

SONGS

Stars of the Summer Night *Lehn' deine Wang* *Cradle Song* *Summer Longings* *Oh, That We Two Were Maying*	NEVIN (*ms.*)

PIANO SOLO

Two Waltzes	NEVIN (*ms.*)
Venezia e Napoli	LISZT

"Mr. Nevin more than renewed the brilliant impression he made last Tuesday at Mr. Lang's concert. His playing of the Bach Fugue was what we liked least; it was brilliant playing, but too much in the spirit of modern pianoforte playing, virtuosity, and too little in the severer, more earnest spirit of the Fugue. The inspiration seemed to come from the fingers rather than from the text. True, nine out of ten pianists today, even great ones, would play this Fugue in much the same way; but this does not make us any the less anxious to hear the tenth. In the two movements from Schumann's Fantasie, Mr. Nevin was on more congenial ground; the second movement was especially well played. This movement calls for not a little

daring on the part of the player, and Mr. Nevin is a player who is not afraid of running risks; he threw himself into his task with superb vigor and the result was simply electric. Still more exciting was his playing of the Chopin study—the one Rubinstein used to astonish audiences with. The Schumann Allegro, very seldom played here, was also given in grand style, and the quicker pieces were played with much grace and sentiment. Upon the whole, Mr. Nevin proved himself to be a pianist who can do splendid things, and from whom still finer work may be expected. With all his dash and daring he evinces a sense of musical proportion, which leads him to draw the rein at the right moment and his technique is sufficient to warrant his daring style of playing. He plays boldly, but never quite recklessly. When he has learned to give his more fiery passages all the finish of execution, and especially of phrasing, that is to be admired in his quieter moments, he will be a pianist like very few. There is an exuberance of vigor in him that will bear refining; there is little danger of its all being refined away. As for his compositions, the two walzes struck us as unimportant, but the songs are, one and all, delightful. Perhaps their most salient characteristic is the spontaneity of melodic invention they show. They are what the Germans call *Strophenlieder*—that is, songs in which the same melody goes to every verse—and the melody is, in itself, so flowing, so pregnant, that all the subtleties of harmonization in the accompaniments seem to spring naturally from the leading melodic idea, instead of being dragged in by the hair for their own sake. Miss von Holz sang them absolutely delightfully, as she did also the fascinating little Mozart Arietta and Siebel's song from 'Faust.'"

Nevin had taken his place—not one of exceptional eminence, but a place of honor—in the musical life of Boston.

> "Things move along," he wrote, "in a quiet but profitable way; I am gaining ground and that makes me better contented with myself. My songs will soon be out and they do look very attractive. I have been trying to make

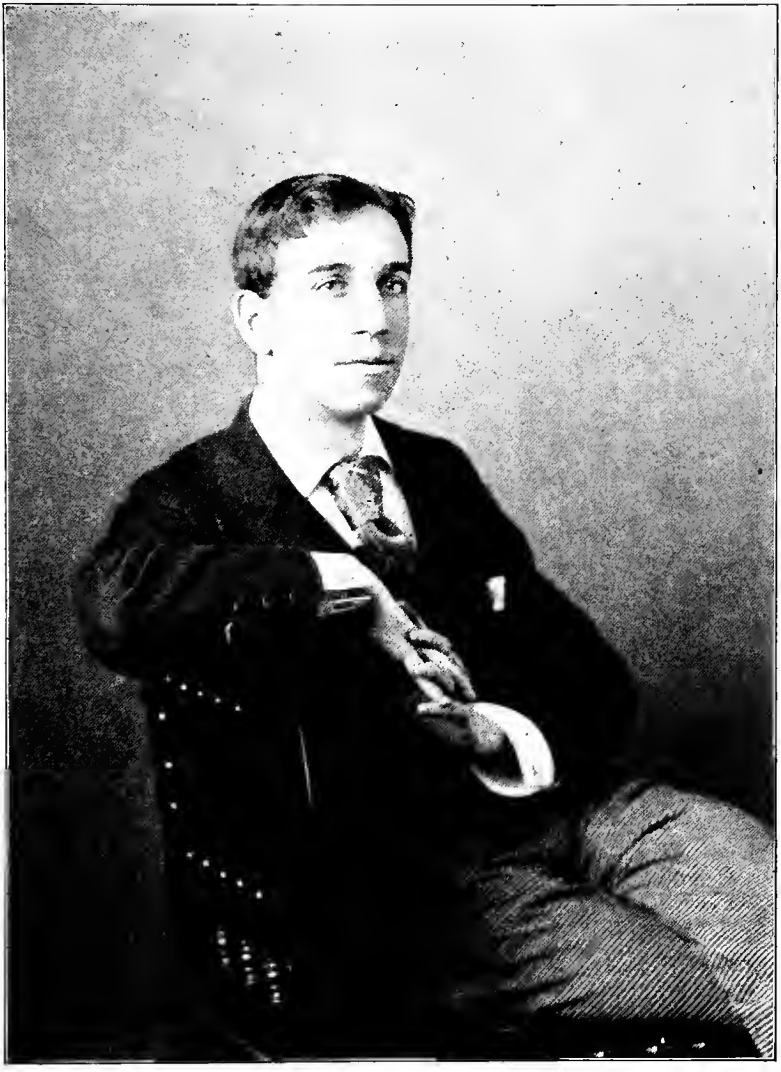
arrangements for a number of concerts and hope I shall be successful. I have two pupils and will soon have others — before long I hope so many I won't know what to do with myself."

So the months passed, with occasional concerts — at Wells College, at Elmira, New York, at Boston — and with lessons. In the autumn he gave one concert in Pittsburg. For some reason — inefficient business management, it may be — there was a very small attendance. "A cold and dreary concert," he wrote, "it makes me shudder to think of it." The financial failure of the concert was also a keen disappointment to him. He had counted upon it for many reasons. It was to be one of the stepping-stones to his marriage. In this momentary discouragement he wrote one of his "blue letters" to his mother — a letter he vainly tried to recall.

"If you could only know, dear mother, how I repent having written it! When I wrote I was completely upset over such bitter disappointments that I hardly knew what I was writing. Nothing I could say in my defense would justify my sending such a morbid letter to you when you have trouble enough — all I ask is that you pardon me. Heaven knows I do little enough for the family and no one feels it any more than I do."

One of the last letters dated from his bachelor rooms in Mount Vernon Place, was written on his twenty-fifth birthday. His mother had sent him a cheque bidding him buy the birthday gift he liked best. This was his answer:

"Your dear letter enclosing the birthday present for me came yesterday and I thank you more than I can tell. The greatest gift I could have came in the little note where you say you 'thank God for the gift of my life to you!' Nothing can ever take that from me, and you can have no idea how thankful I am that my life has been a happiness to you; that you do not regret the day I came to this world and opened my eyes to the stage on which I was to fight life's battles and to enjoy life's happiness.



Ethelbert Nevin, in 1887

"Now you say in your note that you want me to get something that will give me pleasure. I have done so and I have had a jolly good time running about the stores looking something up. Before I started out I decided that the thing that would give me most happiness would be to get something for my darling mother, as you know I don't have many opportunities of sending anything to you. So I bought this little lap tablet and from it you are going to write to Anne and me and keep it in your corner all for yourself and remember how happy and much obliged I am to you for giving me such a nice birthday present. It has indeed given me happiness. I love you all so dearly and I so often long to be with you."

Then there was a farewell dinner—his bachelor dinner—at the Union Club. The wedding cards were out. The last week of the year he went home. Here is the letter that announced his coming:

"My dear Mother:

I shall leave Boston on Wednesday evening and expect to reach Pittsburg on Thursday morning early.

"Have written to Anne to meet me in town and go to dear old Vineacre with me. Remember I am to have my little room and everything is to go along the same way, only some jolly old talks and *mulls* over the natural gas fire.

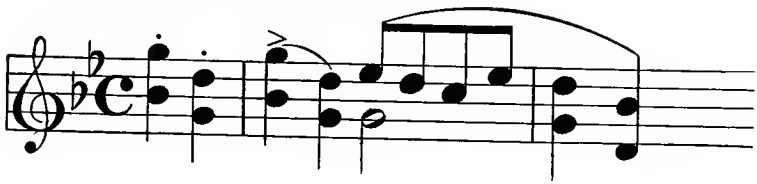
"If it is not too much trouble would you kindly tell the boys I speak for the horses for a drive sometime on Saturday? I'm so glad I'm coming. Oh, give me home!

"Always your loving son,

"Ethelbert."

CHAPTER SIX

"THE SKETCH BOOK"



CHAPTER SIX

"THE SKETCH BOOK"

"'THE happiest event of his life was his marriage, on the fifth of January, 1888, to Miss Anne Paul. She has been a loving helpmate, entering into all his plans with zealous solicitude, and alleviating his troubles as best she could in her sweet, womanly way. I have heard him say she was one of his best critics. Their lives flow along pleasantly and happily because of the love and devotion they bear to one another."

These lines are quoted from the sketch written by Ethelbert Nevin's mother.

The wedding was picturesque and unusual—an artist's wedding—as may be seen from this fragment of a newspaper report:

"The Church itself—St. Peter's—in its Christmas dress of green—tall pines rising at intervals of every three or four pews, their lofty crests towering and losing themselves in the dusky heights above; graceful branches decking the chancel and the organ loft—resembled nothing so much as a thickly wooded grove; and the aisles seemed a primeval pathway, the over-hanging branches meeting and interlacing until they formed romantic arbors. The music was entrancing. First Mr. Mellor at the organ gave a short anti-nuptial concert into which he appropriately introduced Mr. Nevin's famous 'Serenade.' The last number of the programme was skillfully merged into the bridal chorus from 'Lohengrin.' This was caught up by an invisible choir of boyish voices. Soon the white-surpliced singers appeared and passed down a side aisle two by two, singing as they went, reaching the entrance just in time to escort the bridal party to the altar. When the voices of the childish choir were hushed, the strain was taken up by a chorus of women's voices and chanted to the finish, the last strains dying away as the young bridegroom stepped forward to claim his bride from her father's keeping. All through

the service which was led by the Reverend Mr. Rogers, rector of the Edgewater church, Bishop Whitehead assisting, the sweetly simple air of Mr. Nevin's 'Serenade' was rendered by Mr. Mellor in tones so low and soft as to be but a half-heard dream of melody."

Thereupon there was a reception and then the young couple left for Boston. Perhaps all wedding journeys are the same, when youth and love go hand in hand; what this one was you may learn from a letter — faded now — of January 8th, 1888:

> "We were very circumspect on our way East and I don't think anyone suspected us, unless it was because we both had the bride and groom look in our eyes. In the train at Pittsburg the aisle was completely covered with rice, too, and the boys insisted on singing the wedding chorus and cutting up high jinks. So it may be someone may have 'caught on' after all.
>
> "Harry Adriance left us at Philadelphia after decorating my wife (my wife!) with violets. Ernest left us at Grand Street, and Ned at 23rd Street, New York. We had luncheon; then came on to Boston by the three o'clock train, arriving here at 9 P. M.
>
> "Yesterday morning we came up to 28 Beacon Street and decided to remain there; so we worked all day getting our things into shape; and you would have fairly howled could you have seen Anne and me eating our beans and fish-balls this morning. Anne's costume was meagre and mine still more so, as we had to eat while things were hot, and the way we tried to cook some eggs was absolutely pathetic. We have unpacked our boxes and trunks and are now impatiently waiting for our wedding gifts to come.
>
> "We have only one chair in our new home, and it is a great drawing of lots as to which one of us is going to occupy it. What a whirl we came away in; and I can still see you standing there showering rice on us; and we felt like babes in the woods. We will try as soon as possible to settle down to work and, after all, the *great* joy of such an event is in the retrospective."

In addition to his Boston pupils—they were not many—he taught a bi-weekly class at Spencer. It was not congenial work; he was "always glad when the Spencer days ended;" and indeed this sensitive artist was not born to be a teacher, though under the stress of life he inspired many younger men. He was patient and kindly as a teacher, "sunshiny" as one of his pupils said, but it was not work he loved. Once he remarked: "I love to teach children; but that is because I love children;" and the work he did best as an instructor, was child-teaching, that, and his coaching of great artists in Wagnerian roles. There is a point where the simplest art and the most subtly-achieved meet; the child and the great genius are mysteriously akin.

Against the dreary background of pedagogic work, certain concerts stood out brightly. At the Manuscript Society, February 9th, his two songs for tenor, with piano, violin and 'cello were given. These were "Doris" and "The Rose's Message." They were sung by Charles R. Adams; he was accompanied by Lichtenberg, Hartdegen (notable men, then) and the composer. A week later Nevin could write:

> "My songs at the Manuscript Club are still talked about, and rumors are afloat that I'm to be asked to contribute to the next concert, despite the fact that each composer is to figure but once a season."

His forecast was right, as, at the next concert given by the Manuscript Club in April, his song, "O, That We Two Were Maying," was sung by Charles F. Weber. Meanwhile he had given two piano recitals at Chickering Hall on February 29th and March 11th, playing at the conclusion of a long programme (which included Bach, Chopin, Brahms and his own "Spring Song") the pianoforte transcriptions of the "Niebelungen Ring" made by his master, Karl Klindworth. But the chief event in his musical life was:

> "I am going to have a book published under the title of

> 'A Summer Sketch Book,' ten songs and ten pianoforte pieces. The book will be got up very prettily and I am to get fifty cents on every copy sold or fifty dollars on every hundred copies. If it takes and goes into the hundreds, I will make some money. I am very enthusiastic over it and have been working hard."

The "Sketch Book," as it was finally called, included thirteen songs and piano pieces, and found an immediate sale; withal a very large one. There had long been a prejudice against books of native compositions; indeed, the historians of American music point out there had been a virtual ban upon them. The prejudice was now broken down, the ban was removed, by the remarkable success of Nevin's little volume. It appeared as Opus 2; the "Serenade," published in 1884, ranking as Opus 1, although earlier publications were "The Lovers," 1881, "Apple Blossoms," 1880, and the "Lilian Polka," 1874. There was no Opus number attached to the Seven Songs issued in 1886.

A generation has passed since the "Sketch Book" first came out. The change that has taken place during these years—the new conquests in the harmonic kingdom, as well as the swift advance of musical appreciation—has not injured the vitality of the young composer's book of thirteen songs and piano pieces. Between the covers he had imprisoned a little of eternal youth, a little of immortal love. Rupert Hughes, the most scholarly as he is the most poetical of music historians, in his "Contemporary American Composers," * has confirmed with his authority, the judgment of the earlier critics. From his study of Nevin, "an innovator of American music," I quote his words on the "Sketch Book":

"The contents of the 'Sketch Book' display unusual versatility. It opens with a bright gavotte, in which adherence to the classic spirit compels a certain reminiscence of tone. The second piece, a song, 'In the Wondrous Month o' May,' has such a springtide fire and frenzy in the turbulent accompaniment, and such a fervent re-

(* L. C. Page & Co., Boston)

iterance, that it becomes, in my opinion, the best of all the settings, of this poem of Heine's, not excluding even Schumann's or that of Franz. The 'Love Song,' though a piano solo, is in reality a duet between two lovers. It is to me finer than Henselt's perfect 'Liebeslied,' possibly because the ravishing sweetness of the woman's voice, answering the sombre plea of the man's, gives it a double claim on the heart. The setting of *Du bist wie eine Blume*, however, hardly does justice either to Heine's poem or to Nevin's art. The 'Serenade' is a very original bit of work, but the song, 'O, That We Two Were Maying!' with a voice in the accompaniment, making it the duet it should be,—that song can have no higher praise than this, that it is the complete, the final musical fulfilment of one of the rarest lyrics in our language. A striking contrast to the keen white regret of this song is the setting of a group of 'Children's Songs,' by Robert Louis Stevenson. Nevin's child-songs have a peculiar and charming grace. He has not been stingy of either his abundant art or his abundant humanity in writing them. They include four of Stevenson's, the best being the captivating, 'In Winter I get up at Night,' and a setting of Eugene Field's, 'Little Boy Blue,' in which a trumpet figure is used with delicate pathos."

It was in the "Sketch Book" that appeared the setting of Heine's familiar lines, *Lehn' deine Wang an meine Wang*, notable for its intense and passionate beauty. Nevin's conception of the poem is original and self-justified, differing widely from that of the many composers who have used it.

Of the eleven songs that went to the world that year the finest achievement—indeed, one of the best of his songs—was unquestionably that exquisite masterpiece, *Lehn' deine Wang an meine Wang*. As Rupert Hughes points out, it "is actually little more than a vocal accompaniment to a piano solo." In other words the accompaniment is "a free instrumental composition with a meaning of its own and an integral value, truly accompanying, not merely supporting and serving the voice." This is very true. It hints at the

essential quality in Nevin's musical invention—a characteristic that one might call melodico-harmonic, for the melody and its subtle harmonies are so intimately united that it is impossible to dissever them. It was this that placed him among the "innovators" and in the succession of Schubert, Schumann and Franz. *Lehn' deine Wang* is a true *Lied*—that kind of complete musical poem, which seemed once so exclusively German and of which Nevin made a form of art at once personal, definite, and perfect.

This little volume contained also that particularly lovely bit of melody, the Berceuse in A flat.

THE HOUSE IN QUINCY, MASS.

Almost coincident with the appearance of the "Sketch Book" was the publication of his Opus 3, containing three songs of a pastoral nature, "Doris," with its aroma of Theocritus, Gœthe's "One Spring Morning, Bright and Fair," and "Deep in a Rose's Glowing Heart," the poem by Margaret Deland. Their success was great —notably that of the blithe Gœthean song.

These triumphs came in the Spring of the year; meanwhile life had gone quietly by; "the honeymoon," Nevin wrote, "is on the wane and the real sensible period has arrived when Anne manages the establishment." The young couple had taken a house in Quincy. This was their first home. It was in Bigelow Street, near the old Adams' place, and their nearest neighbors were Miss Adams, an aged lady with old-time memories of Dolly Madison's reign in the White House, and Hull Adams, her brother, nephew of one president and grandson of another.

Many friends gathered in the little house, musicians and poets. His mother and his sister Lily came on from Pittsburg and made a long visit. And Schopenhauer, a dog born under a roving star, joined the family. Withal Nevin had taken charge — a work of love — of the music in the Quincy church of which the Rev. Mr. Evan Cotton was pastor. He kept on his studio in Boston, giving piano lessons almost daily. He had joined the St. Botolph Club, and it is from there he wrote to his mother, after she had gone back to Pittsburg:

> "As I have an hour or so between lessons, I have dropped in here to write a few words to you. You can have no idea how desolate and forlorn Anne and I have been since your departure. I boarded the six-seven train and went out home, and found Anne asleep on the sofa in the music room. From the handkerchief by her side, and some moisture on her cheeks, I imagine she had indulged in a few tears. We had our quiet dinner and took a turn round the square and came home again. We called Schopenhauer in to us and I think we were each trying to cheer the other, when a knock came to our door, and in came dear old Miss Adams and Mr. Adams. She said she was afraid we would feel lonely, so we all talked and gossiped for a while."

In November he wrote:

> "My dear Mother:
>
> I did not get a letter off to you on Sunday, as I was busy at the church all day and I was very tired after it

was all through; and Monday I teach all day.

"I play in Chickering Hall, in Boston, on the 20th in the afternoon, and at Wollaston on Monday evening, the 12th. I play in Pittsburg on the 15th and 17th of January and give my own concert either late in December or before I go home in January. All these things *Deo Volente*. I am commencing to feel very nervous and anxious.

"The new Symphony Orchestra has asked me for some orchestral manuscript, and if I can work up my Symphonic Poem on 'Sunset on the Allegheny,' from a poem by Margaret Deland, I shall hand it in. I am busy all the time. Christmas music must be composed and prepared for the choir and numerous rehearsals given. Anne's birthday comes tomorrow and I am trying to have some mild surprises for her. I have ordered a few autumn flowers and Emily has made a big combination fruit cake. I am going to get some candles and buy her a bottle of cologne, which was her request. The pup, Schopenhauer, is jumping on me as I write, and makes my chirography look more scratchy even than usual—if such a thing be possible. We lost the pup two days after you left, for over a week. He seemed to be very discontented after his Aunt Lily left him."

The next letter which I shall quote is dated Friday evening, December 21st, 1888; it is a letter like an open window, through which one may look in upon the warmth and comfort of a room and the young happiness it holds:

"My dear mother:

Anne and baby and nurse have retired for the night, and I still have quite a long evening before me. Anne is getting along nicely and the boy is growing to be a very much better looking baby. The doctor was here this evening and said: 'You may be proud of that boy, he has a magnificent head.' Oh, mother, his eyes are so bright, and when he smiles, he smiles all over his face, and oh, how we did watch for his first smile! He has already developed a sense for sound, for he turns his head and his eyes and once even stopped crying to hear nurse ring the bell.

"Anne is commencing to look strong now, and today she sat up for three hours. Tomorrow she and I are going to take a walk—round the room.

"I imagine you all busy with Christmas shopping or rather making and planning, which after all, is the greatest fun.

"Anne and I have enjoyed what little Christmas preparations we have made. You mustn't be surprised to see the 'job lot' sent to the dear ones at Vineacre, but Mother dear, we couldn't buy this Christmas, so just sent little things we had—things we were fond of. We thought they would please you all and I know they will. I have arranged a surprise for Mr. and Mrs. Cotton. The choir are going to assemble here and on Christmas eve, we are going over and sing: 'Holy Night, Peaceful Night' and I hope there will be snow all around, as the lights from the church will be so pretty. Then we will go into the church and the children will have their Christmas tree. Christmas morning the service will be beautiful.

"This time last year I was about going home and brother Bob was just commencing to feel ill. If he continues to feel badly send him on here for a visit. Anne and I would be so glad to have him and it would do Anne so much good. Do try and get him off if only for a week or so. Schirmer tells me the Saint Cecilia have ordered two hundred copies of 'The Night Has a Thousand Eyes' and they are to sing it at one of their concerts soon. Lang conducts.

"This letter will probably reach you on Christmas eve, and I can imagine you all going into the parlor, you and father over by the table; our darling little sister by the piano, where her presents are, Walter's gifts near Lily's and Bob's piled on the piano-chair, with Artie's by the fireplace. Sitting here I can see the pictures on the walls covered with greens and I do hope the tree I see in the corner is really there, because all those things go to make up Christmas.

CHAPTER SIX

Ah me!

For two alone, there in the hall,
Is spread the table round and small.

Seated, I see the two again,
But not alone; they entertain
A little angel unaware.

"I have bought a little tree for him — for Paul — and some pretty tree-things to put on it; and a little Kriss Kringle — may he enjoy the delightful excitement of a Kriss Kringle as long and as much as did his father and mother and uncles and aunties. Then I have a little sheep — which fortunately does not *baa*. The baby's tree will be in the nursery, and all the dear little Christ-children will have greens about them; then I will bring up Anne's presents, and we will have our dinner served there, too. I will put on my best clothes and we shall be just as merry, as merry can be. Well, this mustn't be strung out too long, as it is a busy season; only I can't help writing to you, mother dear, you who have for so many, many years made our Christmas so bright. I can't help telling you how our thoughts naturally turn to our respective homes; but we have a little home of our own now and we must make Christmas time as happy for our boy as you and father did for yours. Good night. God bless you all this Christmas time.

"With unbounded love from Anne, Paul, and

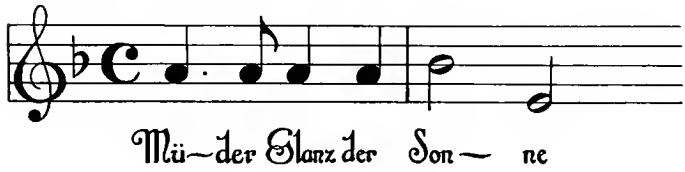
"Your loving son

"Bert."

And so the most memorable year in the young composer's life drew to a close. It was a year that had given him — in the philosopher's thoughtful phrase — two prophylactics against oblivion: a son to bear his name, and songs in which still glow hints and intimations of immortality. He was twenty-six years of age and he had touched the world's heart with his singing.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"HERBSTGEFÜHL"



CHAPTER SEVEN

"HERBSTGEFÜHL"

THE little house in Quincy — the first home — was given up in 1889. Nevin took a large house in town, at 160 Mount Vernon Street. In the last letters from Quincy there are charming pictures of the young composer's life at this time.

"Both as a composer and as a man," said the one who most intimately knew him, "he was essentially a child. To the last he was an enchanted child."

This, in a way, is true. He carried over into manhood unsullied, those heart qualities that belong so exclusively to childhood. He had always a child's intimacy with nature. He had always that vague belief in the souls of inanimate things which never quite dies out in those who keep youth's heart alive. He had quaint fancies about trees and flowers; and over Bayreuth, as you remember, the "stars peeped out here and there like little motives in the prelude," announcing the moon's coming. Children went to him with unhesitating confidence, recognizing in him a member of their mystic brotherhood. It is for this reason he reached the hearts of children — and the hearts of those who love children — as no other composer has done. I do not even except Moussorgski though he, too, knew that children have a world of their own and into that world he had entered as an equal.

In Nevin's child songs there are a sincerity, an ingenuousness and a haunting pathos no other composer has quite attained. For him, as for the child, the world was very mysterious and life was a daily miracle; and this first fresh wonder he never lost — the child's sense of reverence and the child's perfect faith.

That this was only one side of his character is true. He was a prince in the kingdom of childhood, but he travelled far in other realms. One winter night in Quincy he wrote of his own baby :

"It has been bitterly cold here, but we are used to it and our house keeps very warm, not for you 'natural gas' people, but warm for us. Anne has just brought Paul in and if you please he is sitting in a chair beside me, as I write, with his 'Susanna doll.' His little arms are flying around and he says he just loves Susanna and he smiles and blinks at her. I wish you could see him as he sits there, first with one thumb in his mouth, then trying to get both hands in. . . .

"There is an intermission here, as the young man evidently has an objection to being described and I've been obliged to go to the piano and play for him. The moment I commence he laughs and coos and kicks out his legs. He is just as well as he can be and seems to be thriving splendidly on his new food. Now Anne has taken him off upstairs and he is going to sleep to his daddy's 'Bedtime Song', all mixed up with 'Addio bella Napoli': his mamma's two favorite songs. I am so glad he is a boy — and such a sturdy little fellow. Anne and I can hardly wait to have you all see him, and see his Aunt Lily's expression when he laughs at her — he laughs all over his little face. She will want to eat him up; and I am just wild to hear his grandmamma sing him to sleep with 'The Little Ones Are the Stars, I Guess, and the Bright Moon Is the Shepherdess.' Maybe she will think his daddy is a small boy again. I recite 'Thanatopsis' to him and tell him all about 'Baby Bunting' and that is the extent I go. I can't sing to him. We have a bright red tennis hat, with a brilliant yellow rattle hanging to it, on the post of the bed in our room, and you would roar to see him in the mornings early cooing and laughing at it while he lies in his little bed. He has been going out of afternoons but the past two have been too cold. What a baby letter I have written, but he has grown to be such an important part of our lives, that for this once I am going to let other matters go and devote it all to baby."

Then came the christening and the young father wrote of it to his own mother with pride and with the reverence he always had

for holy things :

"The afternoon was beautiful, and at four o'clock our little procession moved over to the church, headed by nurse and baby boy. We went into the church and the little man laughed and cooed at the stained glass and seemed perfectly enraptured. The baptismal service is very beautiful and we all stood around the font at the entrance to the church — a pretty idea — and Mr. Paul held our dear little baby boy, and Billy and Mr. Cotton stood on either side. Every time they would respond he would look at each one so knowingly ; and when Mr. Cotton would read he would glance at him. The sunlight came in through the window and I would have given anything could you have seen the pretty picture. Mr. Paul looked very proud with the boy in his arms. Then Mrs. Cotton took him and handed him to Mr. Cotton and the little fellow never whimpered. After he had been made a little Christ child, Anne put his tiny cap on him and Hannah took him home, while we remained for Easter even prayer.

"Anne looked so sweet and proud in her white gown. My only sorrow was that not one of my family would be with us. As I stood in the church, I felt I would give a great deal if you or father or Lily, or one of the boys, could have been there to see the little new member of our family sanctified into Christ's keeping. (This is said by the minister, as he holds the babe in his arms : 'We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock ; and do sign him with the sign of the Cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end.')

"Easter was a hard day ; service at 7 A. M., 10.30 A. M., 4 P. M. and 9.30 P. M. Everything went beautifully and the church was one mass of flowers. Some loving hands decorated the organ and put greens about the bench, as a farewell to me, for next Sunday is my last. I wrote a carol for the children to sing as processional.

These were the words:

PROCESSIONAL HYMN

"THE STRIFE IS O'ER, THE BATTLE DONE"

MUSIC BY ETHELBERT NEVIN

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
The strife is o'er, the battle done;
The victory of life is won;
The song of triumph has begun.

ALLELUIA!

The powers of Death have done their worst,
But Christ their legions hath dispersed:
Let shout of holy joy outburst,

ALLELUIA!

The three sad days are quickly sped;
He rises glorious from the dead:
All glory to our risen Head!

ALLELUIA!

He closed the yawning gates of hell,
The bars from Heaven's high portals fell;
Let hymns of praise His triumphs tell!

ALLELUIA!

Lord, by the stripes which wounded Thee,
From Death's dread sting Thy servants free
That we may live and sing to Thee

ALLELUIA! AMEN!

"I wish you could have heard the two hundred little children sing it as they walked up the aisle. In his remarks to the children Mr. Cotton said: 'And we must never forget in our Easter Sundays to come, the one who is so soon to leave us, and who wrote for you your glorious hymn: *The strife is o'er, the battle done!*'

"Anne and I thought of you yesterday, and we imagined the boys and Lily making merry over your birthday—we

did wish we might have been with you. Anne's gift has not gone yet, owing to the fact that I failed to get a certain thing that is necessary for its completion. But Sunday came, we had company and—as occasionally does happen when one is keeping house—my wealth suddenly ran out. But I'm going to town today and it will be sent off soon. I am sure you will think it pretty. Anne and I designed it. Goodbye, and may this year be the very happiest year yet and others to come still happier."

Although Nevin's music had gained the approval of musicians and reached a wide audience his money struggles were still many and difficult. He wrote:

"I've sold out all my right, title and interest in some of my compositions for $125. They brought me in about one hundred and fifty a year, but immediate money was necessary—the sacrifice seems terrible!

"I'm having a beautiful time! Varney leaves tomorrow and I have no servant in view; this house has been rented and I shall have to move as soon as possible into town. Now as I've just $3.75 in the bank to move on, get my food and pay off my bills out here (with no immediate prospect of more money), the outlook is cheerful!"

And this, of course, was the psychological time for those good angels, always hovering over him, as his mother thought, to appear. In the following note he sent his good news:

"*April 2, 1889.*

"My dear Mother:

As I have usually, from a small boy up, gone to you when I was in trouble, I must share my good news with you. Since January first over eleven hundred copies of my songs and things, that Schirmer has published, have been sold and he today handed me a cheque for $83.90 making in all for nine months $129.72—so you see that is pretty good for a beginner. I was very much surprised when Schirmer handed me the check and you may imagine I was glad. I only send this line as I know father, you, the boys and

Lily will be glad to hear of it—not the mere fact of my having received some eighty dollars, but the fact that my music is in such demand."

When summer came they were established in the big house in Mount Vernon Street; and Nevin was looking forward to the arrival of Arthur, his youngest brother, then beginning a career of high musical achievement. Of these things he speaks in letters to his father:

"This is really the first spare moment I have had for a long time in which I might acknowledge the receipt of your kind letter. There has been so much to be done, that to save expense, Anne and I have done things ourselves. It has taken much time and even after all I find the only thing I can do well is to play the piano, teach and compose.

"I agree with you that making the 'cello an instrument of profession is not a desirable thing for Arthur to do. While it is a beautiful instrument, it is still dependent upon a stronger background; and does not open the way to composition, or to individual work. It is confining and no matter how well one may be able to play, he can never look much higher than a place in an orchestra, and perhaps a little teaching; but even as a teacher one would never get the prices paid to a piano teacher.

"Still, we both hope Arthur can come on, as the stay here will do him good and his music can be one of the branches he should pursue.

"My outlook is most encouraging, but I feel the year passed in Quincy—outside of my own development—was thrown away. I must live and move in the whirl of the world for a while yet, and make myself and my compositions known—then perhaps I can really live at some place in the country and if I am ever able to buy, I think I should like my summer home to be in Pennsylvania. But that is a long way off.

"I am sure I could arrange for Arthur to study very reasonably; and if he could try it for, say from September till January, by that time we should be able to judge of his

proficiency. If we find he has real ability, it is a duty for us to see that he has instruction. It would be his capital for making his way in the world. I myself think he has musical talent—how much I can't say—but if he progresses I can throw plenty of work into his hands. Try and arrange it in some way. Anne and I will be only too happy to have him with us and we will both do what we can for him, to make him comfortable and happy.

"We have an extra room he could have, and he would be entirely independent. Please think this over and don't look for obstacles. Let us try it for six months, and if it is 'no go,' he will not have lost very much time—indeed it may be the making of him. We shall be in town by the first of September; and any time that Arthur may choose, we shall be ready for him.

"Give much love to one and all, and ask them if I am not right in my plan for Arthur. Do, please, let me try it, at any rate. . . .

"Paul sits in his high chair by me at coffee every morning, and he eats bread and milk and boiled water and a Bent cracker; and he puts his dirty little hand on Daddy's velvet jacket, laughing and trying to talk. He is the sweetest little baby and is never one bit troublesome."

Of Nevin's compositions published in 1889, the most important was Opus 5, a group of songs containing "'Twas April"—that deft and original setting of a difficult verse form—the *Chanson des Lavandières*, the "Raft Song," "Before the Daybreak," (with 'An Old Song') and *Herbstgefühl.* This latter song, the English title of which is "Autumn Sadness" did not win the immediate popularity of the others—for example, "'Twas April;" but long ago it won its place as one of the noblest songs in the world's music. Of this song Rupert Hughes has written: "It is to me, in all soberness, as great as the greatest of the *Lieder* of Schumann, Schubert or Franz. In *Herbstgefühl*—or "Autumn Mood"—Gerok's superb poem bewails the death of the leaves and the failing of the year, and cries out in sympathy:

CHAPTER SEVEN

Such release and dying
Sweet would seem to me.

"Deeper passion and wilder despair could not be crowded into so short a song, and the whole brief tragedy is wrought with a grandeur and climax positively epic. It is a flash of sheer genius."

This song was always Nevin's favorite.

"It is the one I like best," he used to say. He dedicated it to that kindly second mother he found in the Berlin *pension*, Fräulein von Finck.

The same year saw the publication of "Wynken, Blynken, and Nod," as solo and chorus, with four-hand piano accompaniment. It was dedicated to his own little son, and in sending a copy he wrote to his mother:

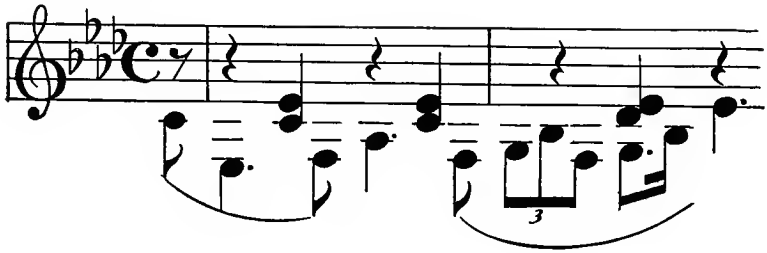
> "Paul creeps all around and stands up beside a chair. Anne and I feel like enjoying every moment of his babyhood, as he is growing rapidly and will, before long, be like your boys. It's too bad the babies insist upon growing, while their parents seem to be standing still. I'd like to have twenty little babies round me all the time."

At this time his concert work had greatly increased. He played many times in Boston and gave piano recitals and Wagner lectures in Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit and other cities of the Middle West.

> "I seem to have jumped into a reputation," he wrote; "and proofs to be corrected are piled high on my desk, and the publisher is clamoring for manuscript."

CHAPTER EIGHT

"NARCISSUS"



CHAPTER EIGHT

"NARCISSUS"

"*Boston, March 20th, 1890.*

"My dear Father:

YOU can have no idea of the pleasure your letter brought me. I'm glad you like the dress of the 'Wynken, Blynken and Nod.' I sold Schirmer four piano pieces day before yesterday for one hundred dollars cash. He told me he would guarantee me one hundred and over in one year's royalty, but I had to have the money then.

"So far this year I have made on my compositions about three hundred dollars — not including royalties due me April 1st. While this is a small sum, still it is a beginning; and if I can sell to advantage some more manuscript that I have, I hope to bring that amount up to six hundred, before next July.

"Before I am thirty-two, I hope to have an income from my compositions, that will bring me in at least three thousand a year. If I can do that then I see my way clear. My teaching brings me in about $30 a week, but servants — $10 — food, other necessities more than swallow that up. I have, however, a number of concert engagements here in April; first, ninth and twenty-second; the only times I expect to play in public this winter, as I have refused right and left. It became simply impossible to teach, compose and prepare for concerts.

"By the way, I am very much interested in the writings of George Meredith. I've read 'Evan Harrington' and am now reading 'The Ordeal of Richard Feveral.' You must read this book (which I think, his strongest) and I am going to send it to you. I've gained so much from it, and to my mind the English in it is something wonderful. Perhaps I am somewhat prejudiced in his favor by circumstances — coming as his books did after a whole

winter's work at French. I determined last Autumn to read nothing but French, as I knew so little of French literature. So I have read Molière, Hugo, Lamartine and Balzac — and the English books come like a long vista of green trees—such as we saw in Windsor. Do you remember them? I think I must have been very impressionable at that time, as I am constantly thinking of the things seen and heard then, not so much musically, as from nature and strangeness. I can never be thankful enough to you for having taken me on such a trip. . . . Paul has just had his first walk by himself. I only wish he may have as many arms held out to him all through his life as he had the other afternoon when he took his first steps."

A little later he wrote:

"In the last two weeks I have not been idle in my composition work, as I have written and sold fifty-two pages of manuscript. This means a good deal for me as I usually compose very slowly, though in other things I go ahead rapidly and use up my energy. In looking over my list of compositions, I find I have finished in my seven years' musical work — counting from my twenty-first year — forty-eight compositions."

In that year, 1890, Nevin published Opus 6, the three duets for piano, a "Valse Caprice," a "Country Dance" and a "Mazurka;" Opus 7, which consisted of four piano compositions: *Valzer Gentile*, the "Slumber Song," the "Intermezzo" and "The Song of the Brook." It was with them he gained a hold upon the affections of the amateur pianist, which he never lost.

In addition to these piano pieces he published that year his Christmas Carol, "The Silent Skies Are Full of Stars." This was the third of his Christmas carols, as in 1889 he had written, "The Earth Has Grown Old." The poems were by Bishop Phillips Brooks, of whom Nevin wrote in his diary.

"He is more like a saint than any other man, woman or child I have ever seen."

This same year he also wrote and published "Everywhere, Everywhere Christmas Tonight." His love for Christmas was always very beautiful and very reverential. It was bound up with memories of a happy childhood and deeply associated with his religious faith. In all his travels the day was kept in the old-fashioned way — in Italy, Germany or France — with song and prayer, with merriment and dance. There was always a Christmas tree; there were always happy children to dance round it; in the home of his manhood as in his boyhood home.

This year also, Nevin published his four Sacred Songs: *Nunc Dimittis*; *Benedictus*; *Jesu, Jesu, Miserere*; and the *Jubilate*, which he dedicated to his pastor in Quincy, Dr. H. Evan Cotton.

In the autumn the Nevins were established at 30 Pinckney Street, in Boston, "the prettiest home we ever yet had, a dainty little house in Henry Cabot Lodge's 'backyard,' so to speak." There he celebrated his twenty-eighth birthday. "Paul's greeting with a bunch of flowers started off the day." That month he played the *Nixenquelle* (for two pianos) with MacDowell at the Sumner memorial; and December 16th he gave a recital assisted by Mrs. Julie Wyman and F. F. Powers. In his diary he wrote:

> "Everything passed off pleasantly enough, though I was thoroughly disappointed in myself, and have determined to take a more decisive stand in my composition work. Things have been too *namby-pamby* and I have a horror of being a 'successful drawing-room song-writer,' with nothing else to back it up."

This he wrote on Thursday, and on Friday he received the most wonderful gift — the complete score of "The Nibelung's Ring" — with the following note: "With what success you have accomplished by the study of the pianoforte score, I trust these orchestral scores will help you to bear still richer fruit and surpass all expectation of yourself and friends. Wishing you a very successful

career in the great musical world, I have the honor to remain, your admiring friend."

And to his mother he wrote:

> "When I take into consideration that these scores must at least have cost $275.00 if they cost a cent, I realize what a wonderful present it was, and to think my own name, Ethelbert Nevin, stands in gold letters on seal binding. Oh, what a gift it was, Mother, and from one who had very little money! And above all to think he deemed me musically worthy of it. I'm so undeserving; and I've lately had such bitter thoughts and feelings; and to think that some person who insists upon being nameless to all but myself, made such a great sacrifice for me!"

That evening he went to New York and played, at the Theodore Thomas concert in the Lenox Lyceum, the accompaniments for three of his songs—sung by Mrs. Wyman—the "Raft Song," "In a Bower" and "Little Boy Blue;" the last two being still in manuscript. When the year closed he was at work on the "Wedding Music" for String Quartette, hoping to finish it and reconstruct the Trio, for violin, 'cello and piano, in time to "risk a concert of his own compositions in March."

In his diary (which he wrote for himself alone and which no eyes, save his own, saw until after his death) there are many intimate revelations of self:

> "In this past week I've written two movements—the first and the Scherzo, or dance—to the 'Wedding Music' for String Quartette, but I'm afraid it's all nonsense; and I question very much whether it will ever see a performance. That does not cause me one half as much sorrow as the thought that perhaps it is so trivial that it is not worth a performance. It is a thousand times better to write something so good that no one will use it, than to create something that IS used and does not deserve usage. So many of us are going along in this daily life of battle and temptation, all trying, I am sure, to lead the better life; but

temptations are so hard to overcome and there are so many of them in one's way, that at times it seems impossible to go any farther. However we gain new strength with the morning's sunlight.

"Oh, some days seem to have a melody in them; and others abound in discords and false feelings and false notes.

"My time ahead is busy enough and I have received encouragement sufficient to make me do many things; yet I feel there is something deficient—something in my nature which has not yet developed, something in my existence, which has not yet come to me! I long for nobler and higher aspirations and desires. I do not mean ambition, as that is already so high that it embraces everything worthy of ambition."

There were days and weeks of this brooding discontent.

Even the success of his Opus 12, made up of five songs: "Little Boy Blue," "In a Bower," "At Twilight," "Beat Upon Mine Little Heart," and a "Summer Day"—even their great success did not change his way of thought. Always he felt there was something wanting to his full artistic development—something which was not to be found in the concert rooms of Boston; and in his diary, March 1st, he again wrote:

"I have decided upon a very important step; *viz*, taking Anne and Paul with me and going abroad, both to France and Germany, for an indefinite sojourn; so that I may study some more and try hard to lay a stronger foundation for my musical career. I am quite prepared for no end of discouragement from both families, but am equally determined to go and do everything in my power toward building myself up; and doing stronger, better work. Anne seems perfectly willing to share the hard part with me, and if it were not for her encouragement, I don't know what I should do. She will make a composer of me yet. I feel I have got into a rut; and my musical foundation was never quite firm enough for me to build very strongly upon it. Of course I am going into greater debt in doing

what I have now determined to do, but I feel so firmly convinced I am doing what is right, that nothing can dismay me, or make me alter my decision—unless some distress or calamity, I know nothing of, should arrive. We are both young and we have, we may hope, many years ahead of us; and perhaps important positions to occupy; and we must prepare ourselves.

"Ambition cannot be wrong, and youthful ambition is often the best stimulus to later active life. One thing surely: I see my own imperfections and I am ready to acknowledge them and use every effort to throw them aside. No one else can judge for me. I must be my own judge; and if I try to look at everything conscientiously; if I try to do my real duty, I am confident I shall be doing what is best.

"My life so far has been entirely governed by a Divine Hand. I am positive that my earthly course is planned—that my daily destiny was long ago ordained; but my spiritual welfare I must shape for myself, according to what I can get from my Teachers and what I can gain from my surroundings; and above all, what is told me by my *inner* consciousness—which invariably discriminates between right and wrong."

There was, as Nevin foresaw, opposition at Vineacre to his projected return to Europe; and he argued the matter in a letter to his mother:

"Your letter, dearest mother, came this evening, and I was quite prepared for contrary views; and your ideas were just what I wanted, as I do not wish to do anything impulsively or in a rash way. Indeed, I want all kinds of advice and discussion on the subject. I do not believe I am what is called *pig-headed*; and if strong arguments are put before me, and prove *convincing*—I am perfectly willing to abide by them. Your letter was just the thing I wanted. You say:

"'I would not blame a man if he borrowed money to invest in something that would pay him back; but this would be a dead loss, excepting what you might gain mentally.'

Cast of Ethelbert Nevin's Hand

"Now, my dear Mother, in my case it would be quite wrong to invest five thousand dollars borrowed money in, say, silver mines, because I am not a business man. But surely you know that what I gain *mentally*, is my source of income. My debts are not 'enormous,' and I am young enough to have years ahead of me to pay them off. A few years from now, it is true, I should have more money of my own, but my mind would not be as impressionable as it is while I am young; and we can never tell what a year may bring forth.

"You see in newspaper work, I could not possibly give an opinion worth stating; and I should have to apply to Father for advice. Again in points of all the beautiful and lovely things a mother can do, I would know nothing and should have to go to you for advice. So in points of music — which was born in me — you must try to think that I am doing what I know to be right — for myself.

"I am having such splendid encouragement from all parts of the states; but it only stimulates my conviction of my own incapabilities. I know I have God-given talent — and I am going to use every bit of nerve, vitality and life that is in me to develop it and win a name that shall live.

"Have patience with me, dear mother, even if you are not convinced I am doing right; and remember that with all my work I *must feel* the sympathy of Father and you, and the brothers and the sister who are dearer to me than almost anything in the world. Think also of the discomforts Anne is going to put up with: a small flat in a strange land; housekeeping where the very language is unknown; giving up all her ties here, where her great love is — her friends, position, and all the petting and flattery one could dream of. She gives up everything for me and my career as an artist, and composer."

That season, for money's sake, he filled many concert engagements, not only in Boston but in New York and Philadelphia.

"I have composed a little," his diary reads, "taught a little more, and played very much more — a curious thing when

> I am convinced I am a better composer and a better teacher even, than I am a piano-virtuoso. I have finished the 'Water Scenes'—Dragonfly, Ophelia, Water Nymph, Narcissus and Barcarolle. While I am doing nothing great, I am doing the best I can and I am going to leave behind me, if it is possible, a trail of sunshine."

He was in Europe when the "Water Scenes" were published. They gave him an immense popularity, owing chiefly to "Narcissus" which was thrummed and whistled half round the world. It was played in Cairo as in New York, and Paris; it was played by orchestras and on church organs and on the mouth harps of Klondike miners; it became a mode, almost a mania; and a music-critic of the *Washington Post* wrote without levity:

"Three little colored boys trudged up Fifteenth St. in the rain late Wednesday night. They had been to the theatre, and they were in such high spirits they didn't notice the rain. They were whistling as they marched along, and the song they whistled was Nevin's exquisite 'Narcissus.' They whistled it beautifully, too, and if that isn't a hopeful sign for the capital's musical future I don't know what you'd call it. Symphony concerts and classical opera, at goodness only knows how much a seat, may prosper in any community, but when really good music gets itself whistled in the streets, I think general culture is certainly looking up."

"Narcissus" was ground out by the hurdy-gurdies in the streets of every city, and Albert Edward, then Prince of Wales, *commanded* a performance at Marlborough House. This was given by the Eugene Oudins.

Legends grew up about it. All sorts of fanciful stories were printed. One anecdote was seriously related by Daniel Gregory Mason, who was a pupil of Nevin's, in the *New Music Review*. Thus: "One day Mason called on Nevin and found him playing over a piano piece he was working on. Mason was at once caught by the lazy grace of the rhythm, and expressed his pleasure with boyish ardor. Nevin replied laughingly: 'You are not my only victim. The idea first

came to me on Monday — washing day, you know — and as I was playing away at it here in my studio, I looked up and there in the doorway were our two maids, cook and second girl, quite spellbound, their mouths open with delight. They had been lured all the way from the basement laundry by the seductive tune.'"

And "Narcissus" went its way in the world; it sold not by thousands, but by the hundreds of thousands; no composition by an American composer has had to stand such wear and tear. Yet, today, its vitality is unimpaired. Nevin himself always considered it one of his trivial compositions; and it was invariably with a sort of whimsical amusement that he saw himself described as the *Man Who Wrote Narcissus.* This is not an unusual destiny. The general public has always loved to personify the artist in some one of his works and usually in that one which made the wide, immediate appeal. (For years Edgar Allan Poe, was known as the author of "The Raven.") Now the direct, compelling charm of "Narcissus" appealed to all hearts. And though its melodic line does not rise to the highest plane, "Narcissus" is perfect in its kind — perfect in unity and eurhythmic proportion; and in spite of the fact that for a quarter of a century it has been thrummed in the restaurants and whistled in the alleys of the world, its sincerity still charms and its freshness is not worn away.

Nevin sailed on a German boat, May 28, 1891, for Europe.

CHAPTER NINE

"OPUS 17"

CHAPTER NINE

"OPUS 17"

THEN it was Berlin. Nevin and his little family went to the familiar *pension* in the *Friedrichstrasse;* where Fräulein von Finck had garlanded their rooms with lilies of the valley. They remained for a month; and Nevin met again many of the musicians he had known in his student days — Klindworth, of course; and Karl Bial, who was then a dying man; and Tiersch who was to die in a few months; and von Bülow, who, older than either of these two men, was still a truculent figure in the music world. Rubinstein, too, he heard in concert for the last time. In a little while Rubinstein, like von Bülow and the others, was to be only a memory to those who had known him.

The Nevins went to Paris, July 1, and found a temporary home in the *rue Lesueur*, a little street running to the *Avenue de la Grande Armée*. They found many of their friends in Paris: Emma Eames, Mrs. Julie Wyman, Madame Carreño; found "glorious weather all summer long." Nevin had a large number of pupils from the first. In August he wrote music to Victor Hugo's beautiful song, *S'il est un charmant gazon*. Meanwhile he was looking for a more spacious apartment. One that he liked very much was in the Luxembourg quarter, but Rosa Bonheur, who occupied the apartment underneath, "objected to music." Nevin remarked in his diary that an apartment in the same house with Shakespeare and Michelangelo would not do him much good if he could not use his piano; and finally he rented a pleasant flat in the *Avenue Malakoff*. So he wrote to his mother:

> "Well, we have at last found an apartment for the next six months; and we are looking forward to a very happy and prosperous winter. We have two bed-chambers (also the cook's bedroom) quite large and comfortable. Anne will

have a little *salon*, then comes the *salle-à-manger;* then my music room, which is a beauty; then a kitchen, with a range and gas stove. There is a *cabinet de toilette* that will make a fine dressing-room; besides there are a large number of closets. We are up three flights in a very handsome house in the *Avenue Malakoff*—which is just off the *Bois de Boulogne.* We hope to get into the apartment by the

FRÄULEIN VON FINCK AND PAUL NEVIN

first of October; and it will cost us $75 a month, including furniture, linen, silver, china and glassware.

"Anne is sick in bed today, with neuralgia, but I hope by tomorrow she will be well again. Poor child, she has been used up! You will imagine it when I tell you that we have been out six consecutive evenings to dinner. On Monday evening we had Baron Haussmann's box at the opera. We dined out and Anne went in full ball costume. Then Tuesday Madame Moreau gave a dinner party and reception in our honor, at which one of the members of the opera was

engaged to sing. I enclose *menu* and card as they may interest you.

"I have just coaxed Anne out of bed and taken her into the *salon* to let the room air well. Poor girl, her head is aching pretty badly. She has been taking singing lessons every week outside her social duties; and Mother dear, Anne is going to have a beautiful voice. Think what it will mean to me to have her sing my songs."

Then the Erard grand was moved in and "work began in earnest." That first week in the Paris home he wrote the music to Edwin Arnold's "The Rhine and the Moselle"; and "with a wild storm going on outside and everything within peaceful and happy, I wrote quite a good deal at the 'Echo Scene.'"

The days were splendid and full, he wrote. The first Colonne music concert was given October 18. His diary note is suggestive:

"The programme included Beethoven's Symphony, No. 1, in C major. I missed the first two movements but arrived in time for the last two which struck me as being played in a superficial manner. When one takes into consideration the simplicity of the motives, the construction and the orchestration, it does not seem wise to me to overburden it with forced expression and sentiment. Then, too, it was taken in such a rapid *tempo* as to make it very much more brilliant than Beethoven, I am sure, intended it to be. The music of Massenet's *Esclarmonde*, on the other hand, was most delightfully played; and the horns and wood wind work were something to be remembered. The composition in itself is enormously interesting and shows Massenet at one of his best moments in handling orchestral coloring. *Les Maîtres-Chanteurs* was played just as its name sounds, in French — no body, a great deal of noise, and very little breadth of tone. I fancy Wagner would be rather surprised to hear how really *piquant* his "Dance of Apprentices" can be made. It wasn't a bit rugged, but graceful, smooth and quite ballet-like!"

The Lamoureux concerts he thought a vast improvement on the

Colonne. At a concert given by Mendels, the violinist, he heard Brahms' Quartette for piano, violin, viola and 'cello, played by Mendels and his men in a way that would have "left Brahms astounded at his own frivolity;" but Chaminade played the piano part to her Trio for piano, violin and 'cello; and that was "wholly delightful."

Diary leaves are interesting when they show phases of real life—when the quotidian events they record, though small in themselves, reflect clearly a personality. I have transcribed a few pages that you may see Nevin's life in the Paris of that day, sketched lightly by his own hand.

> "Taught all morning. Afternoon wrote a song, the words by Sully-Prudhomme, *Le Vase Brisé*. Evening at home. Dolesome weather. Went to church. Afternoon to Lamoureux concert. The programme was Mozart's E minor Symphony, the second, third and fourth parts of Berlioz's 'Romeo and Juliet;' Saint-Saens' *Rhapsodie Bretonne* and the prelude of the 'Flying Dutchman.' It was not good playing. The Saint-Saens novelty was monotonous, but well orchestrated. The 'Flying Dutchman' was played better than anything else. I never heard the scherzo (Queen Mab) from 'Romeo and Juliet' taken so slowly—it lost its hum and buzz; but the 'cock crowing' was the best I have yet heard. Wrote *Hab ein Röslein dir gebrochen*. Gave lessons. Evening went to Madame Bonnet's to meet Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Oudin. They sang beautifully.
>
> "Sent off to Schirmer Opus 17, three songs: *Hab ein Röslein*, *Le Vase Brisé* and *Rappelle-toi*. Worked on Opus 16, Fantasie for violin and piano. After dinner went to a billiard match between Carter and Vignaux. Carter won. Drank chocolate at the *Grand Café* and retired late.
>
> "Worked all morning and immediately after *déjeuner* set off for the *Conservatoire* to hear the Bach B minor Mass. A stunning performance; chorus of thirty-eight women and forty men; twenty-eight violins, seven double basses, two solo double basses, ten 'celli, flute, *hautbois*

d'amour, and *petite trompette*. The two latter instruments I had never heard before. I must say that I do not care much for the effect of the *trompette* in the *Resurrexit*. The *hautbois d'amour* was exceedingly well played, (as all the wood-winds seem to be here) and in *Et in spiritum sanctum* it was something wonderful. At times it had the quality of an English horn. It struck me there was too much orchestra for such a small hall and a comparatively small choir. How much better a small choir is than one of our 'May Festival' affairs! The singing of the *Conservatoire* choir surpasses anything I have heard in that line. The whole thing was given with dignity and breadth.

"Yesterday, Sunday, I went to *St. Sulpice* to hear Widor's chorus and the music to the high mass. There is something very impressive about the Roman Catholic Church; and if I could believe and worship as the good Roman Catholics do, I think I would be the happiest man in the world! Our terrible Puritanical training makes us suspect everything; and believe by the rule of three, not even permitting the 'rule of three' to be presented in an attractive form. My rule of three is my imagination.

"Up very late. My barber came. Then I had a walk in the *Avenue du Bois*. A *déjeuner* at Mrs. Green's where we met a Miss Cushing who sings and someone else who sang. Evening tried over my Fantasie for violin and piano with M. Magnus; then went to the *Comédie Française* and heard Richepin's wonderful play, *Par le Glaive*. Mounet-Sully was a disappointment, but Madame Bartet is the most satisfactory actress I have seen or heard. A performance in every way delightful. Surely the *Théâtre Français* is the most marvellous playhouse in the world. Late to bed as usual.

"Glorious Spring weather; and the fascinating and attractive Paris life commences; only I am glad we are soon off.

"Taught till five P. M. Anne and I then took a walk and had a cup of chocolate and a glass of beer at the *Café Chinois*.

"Our last day in the pleasant little apartment where we

have been, in the main, so happy. Busy at packing and destroying visiting cards, letters and the accumulation of six months' odds and ends. It is almost ten and I must dress for a musicale. It will take an hour to dress and get there."

Later:

"Reached home at two-thirty in the morning. Heard plenty of music—such as it was. Musicales at best are distressing affairs. Had a funny thing said to me by a Mr. Holman or Holman-Black, I don't remember which. At any rate I was passing him with a plate of cakes to be taken to Mrs. Waring (a lovely lady from Pittsburg) when I remarked: 'I don't think you remember me, do you? I had the pleasure of dining with you here some time ago?' He replied: 'No, I don't think I do. Eh, are you the young man who just played.' I beamed and said 'yes' and went on. It was very, very funny.

"Anne and I had a pleasant *déjeuner* with a young French clergyman yesterday. We rather dreaded it, as neither he nor his wife could speak any English, but to our delight we found they both spoke German; so we had a very enjoyable time. They are very poor and live in a quarter of Paris that is miles from here and is almost out to Vincennes. They are friends of Elbert. He has helped them and during his stay here, I imagine he did no end of good for them. They simply worship him. He was 'best man' at their wedding, is godfather to their little baby, whose name is Georges Elbert Migot and has proved himself a friend indeed. Anne and I had quite a lesson from their pure, simple and honest life. They are both peasant born, and by their life of frugality and self-sacrifice have been able to get a church of their own with a congregation of about one hundred and fifty poor souls they have gathered in from the slums of Paris. They are really very interesting and quite out of the common. . . .

"I have had a splendid offer from Durand, the music publisher; the only trouble is the copyright-law business. I think I am all right, then find I am all wrong, and between

this and that I don't know what to do. If I publish here I'll get more fame and a wider circulation — still Schirmer took me up when I was nobody — well — I want to make fame and money; but I want more to do exactly the upright and honorable thing.

"Evening; went over to the other side of the town to play at a concert for the workingmen and women of Pastor Migot's church. Either I played abominably or they are not fond of music. While I played they took up a collection.

"I carried my chair to and from the piano. If I thought they had enjoyed my music I would have been willing to carry the piano to and from my chair.

"Anyway, I had a beautiful ride home on the top of various busses; the moon was glorious and the very breath of Spring was in the air. Late to bed, dead-tired. This afternoon I gave my first 'Nibelungen' recital. Tomorrow I give the second — 'Siegfried;' and the following day the third recital — 'Götterdämmerung.' Up very early this morning, down town with Paul to the bank; then shopping. Bought tickets for Berlin. Afternoon made some calls and took Mrs. Gardiner to Weeks' studio. From there went to the *Café de la Paix*, where I met Rumford. Dinner with him at the prettiest little *Café Noël*, off the *Boulevard des Italiens*. We had a good time and a long talk together. (He told me his secret.) Later found George Shea at our place. Finished packing and got to sleep at three A. M.

"Up at six. Amélie went with us to the *Gare du Nord* where we took our train for Cöln. Paul parted from her with tears and lamentations. After the most comfortable and delightful day's travel in a first-class compartment, which we had all to ourselves, we arrived at Cöln as fresh and bright as if we had not travelled at all. After a light supper at the 'Hotel du Nord' we retired, and were up at six-thirty this morning, and, after another delightful day, reached Berlin at 5.55 P. M., where we found Fräulein had pleasant rooms for us. And the day of our coming back to Berlin is April 30, 1892."

CHAPTER NINE

And so the diary leaves may be put away. They have told, here and there, of his year of work in Paris. He had taught a great deal. He had given his "Nibelungen" recitals; and, and, in addition he had large classes in what was called *Wagner Exegesis.* These lectures, with piano illustrations, were very charming. Sitting at his grand piano he talked with ease and fluency—and his own rare charm. His analyses were clear; his interpretations, luminous; his illustrations, just.

Can you imagine Nevin's candle-lit studio—for that was the light he loved—in Paris; many people crowded into the oblong room—they were opera singers from all parts of the world and there was whispering in all languages; and Ethelbert Nevin would come in? I (who write down these words) can see him now. Very slim, in his afternoon coat of black, with a tall white collar, he would come in. There was grey in his boyish hair even then. Laughing a little in his embarrassed way, he would sit down at the piano, half-facing his audience. Then (for instance it was to be his "Parsifal" exegesis) he would say in his slow, intimate way, (as though we were all friends and lovers of the ideal) "You know Parsifal? The Aryan derivation of the word means: 'Pure Fool.' It was as though Wagner meant to show a man who was without sin."

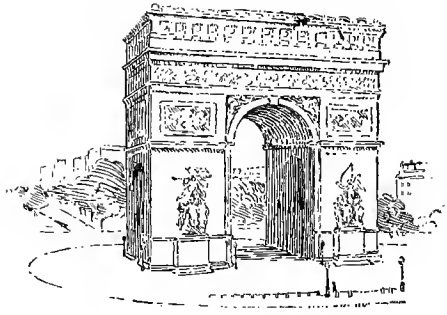
So, half-turned on the piano-stool, he would play the "Parsifal" motive with his left hand; then looking at us, who were his audience, he would indicate the motive of the "Graal," (perhaps throwing both hands on the piano in his high-fashioned, von Bülow way) and say to us, in that wonderful, whispering voice of his: "Wagner evidently meant a man who was without sin"—then, stopping abruptly, he would emphasize the mystic motive of Amfortas and the striations of black and red that make the motive of Kundry.

What days those were—when Ethelbert Nevin interpreted Wagner to a Paris that knew him not; though Villiers de L'Isle Adam had tried in his poet's way to do the same thing! For one generation of Wagner students—the youth of those Parisian days—Nevin

may be said to have opened the doors of Wagner's music-drama.

Of the songs he wrote during this Paris season the most notable was unquestionably *Rapelle-toi* — an elaborate and very French setting of de Musset's poem. In its French quality it foreshadows what Nevin was to do when he transmuted so marvellously the poetic values of Verlaine. "The Rhine and the Moselle," "The Vase," and "The Rosebud" have already been mentioned. The "Fantasie for violin and piano" to which the diary refers as Opus 16, was not published; that Opus number was to have a rarer fortune.

However Opus 18, was finished that winter and sent to the publisher; it comprised the two études for piano, in the form of a romance and in the form of a scherzo.



CHAPTER TEN

"IN ARCADY"

CHAPTER TEN

"IN ARCADY"

THE last eight months of 1892 Nevin spent in Berlin. He gave his entire time to study and to composition. It was a work-period and his diary is merely a record of things attempted and things done. There he wrote "In Arcady" and many of the songs which were to appear in his Opus 20, "A Book of Songs." There, too, he wrote the "Evening Star" and "My Love," for mixed voices, the male quartette for the Nevin Club of Cleveland; the Barcarolle for violin and piano, and the Polonaise for violin and piano, also the Polonaise in A major for piano.

These were quiet and serene days. The thing he had come abroad to find, he had found; he took no pupils and, undisturbed, in his *Kurfürsten Damm* music room, he worked. If his days in Italy were to bring his sensitive genius to its highest flight — in the Tuscan and Venetian suites — this year of solitary work in Germany was to give him that music foundation (to repeat his own words) upon which he might more strongly build.

In the midsummer his diary contained this entry:

> "Little Dorothy Anne Nevin made her advent this evening at 7.40. A dainty, beautiful little baby."

December 11, he sailed, with his family, for America. A few months were spent in Florida, where he wrote the two hymns, which appear in the book of Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, and a Children's Song for the World's Fair at Chicago. Withal he was "still working on the orchestral fantasie—with pianoforte; and everything promises." In May he was back in Boston. There he finished the group of songs, Opus 20. Now that many of them — notably — *Dites-moi*, "Nocturne" and "Every Night My Prayers I

München, 16. September 1892
Neuhauserstr. 11/3

Sehr geehrter Herr!

Unterricht in der Composition habe ich nie erteilt u. kann mich auch nicht dafür verpflichten, da es mir an jeder Lehrübung fehlt. Ich werde diesen Winter, um meine Gesundheit zu stärken, wahrscheinlich im Süden verleben u. kann Ihnen daher nicht anbieten, Ihnen Unterricht im Partiturspiel u. Instrumentationslehre zu erteilen. Doch möchte ich Ihnen als Lehrer für Composition etc. meinen Freund Friedrich Kösch, München Skellstrasse 7 empfehlen, einen hochbedeutenden Musiker, Theoretiker u. Componist allerwärtigster Richtung, der Ihr Lernbedürfniß jedenfalls in ausgezeichnetster Weise befriedigen könnte.

Hochachtungsvoll

Richard Strauss

FACSIMILE OF LETTER FROM RICHARD STRAUSS TO ETHELBERT NEVIN IN ANSWER TO THE LATTER'S APPLICATION FOR LESSONS IN COMPOSITION

Say" — have become world lyrics, it is interesting to read the appreciations of the music-writers of the day. Philip Hale, who found in Nevin's songs, "peculiar fragrance and moving charm," wrote:

"Too many of these local composers forget the great saying of Walt Whitman, the summing up of the wisdom of the Greeks: 'The art of art, the glory of expression and the sunshine of the light of letters is simplicity. Nothing is better than simplicity. Nothing can make up for excess or for lack of definiteness. . . . . To speak in literature with the perfect rectitude and *insouciance* of the movements of animals and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of trees in the woods and grass by the roadside is the flawless triumph of art. If you have looked on him who has achieved it you have looked on one of the masters among the artists of all nations and times. You shall not contemplate the flight of the great gull over the bay, or the mettlesome action of the blood-horse, or the tall leaning of sun-flowers on their stalk, or the appearance of the sun journeying through Heaven, or the appearance of the moon afterward with any more satisfaction than you shall contemplate him.' And how hard a thing is this simplicity.

"Let me take an example:

"Here is Ethelbert Nevin. A volume of ten songs by him has just appeared. Each song bears the familiar hall-mark of Nevin. When I hear a melody by him I think of William Blake's

Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee.

And by the way, Nevin could write the music for Blake's 'Chimney Sweeper', if anyone could.

"Take, for instance, Nevin's setting of Stevenson's 'Every Night My Prayers I Say'. It is a song of only a page and it was written four years ago. Is it not simplicity itself? There is no puerility, there is no triviality; there is no affectation, as though the composer said aloud: 'Come now, I will unbend and show you how simple

I can be.' The music is as frank as the text. Or take the charming setting of Orsola's song from *Par le Glaive;* or in fact any one at random. You find first of all a melody apparently spontaneous; you find harmonies that support, enrich, but do not call the attention away from the singer; and the results of faithful technical study do not obtrude. The appeal is direct; there is no attempt to create merely a *Stimmung;* and, indeed, for that in a simple song there is hardly time or room."

And his New York contemporary, Rupert Hughes, wrote in a magazine:

"The remarkable thing about most songs by well-educated composers is that they are not songs, not lyrical. They are harmonic rambles and meditations in which the voice is treated either like an instrument or like an elocutionist. Nevin's songs have lyrical contour, lyrical impulses; they come forward in graceful curves like waves, and when they reach their destination, they rise to their climax and make a beautiful end.

"I know of no other American composer who has so much essentially of the song spirit that made Franz Schubert popular among both the masses and the classes. Nevin's peculiarly vocal melodies are supported by accompaniments of the highest artistic quality. They enrich the color, they add new fuel to the fire, and they have a completeness and unity of their own. His very introductions are like those magic bits of stage mechanism by which in the twinkling of an eye a complete scene is set and lighted.

"A highly characteristic song is his setting of Thomas Bailey Aldrich's familiar 'Nocturne' beginning *Up to her chamber-window clambers a bold white rose.* As you remember, the watching lover sees his lady lean out of the window and take the rose to her heart, and he sighs:

Ah me, 'twas he that won her
Because he dared to climb.

"Everybody else who had read that poem, and I daresay even

the poet himself, felt it to be simply a frail flower of romance. Many composers had set it to tinkling little tunes and let it go. But when Ethelbert Nevin came along he felt its inner significance, its wild implications, and he made of it a song of passionate desire that makes the blood of the hearer leap as the blood of the timid lover must have leapt when he saw his beloved take into her bosom the Romeo rose. As the voice in this song thrills and surges, so the accompaniment is thrilling; it pulsates like an artery. It has the qualities which were personal to Nevin; they are, so to say, *Nevinesque*.

"And I think that perhaps this is the touchstone by which to test a claim on immortality. If you feel in a man's work a quality, which you can only define by making an adjective of his name; then his work has that individuality without which no genius—however infinite his pains—could hold his own through the rush of time.

"Yes, I think we may call Ethelbert Nevin a great composer of great songs."

With all this public success,—for not only was his high rank as a composer affirmed at home and abroad but, as well, his concert recitals pleased,—his struggle (which was life-long) against ill-health and financial stress, continued unabated. At home there was illness. And, as always, it is in his letters to his mother that one may see him at his best:

> "These have been weary days. Anne has been lying between life and death since Wednesday. She was put under the influence of ether on Wednesday morning at 9.30, when I bade her good-bye. There were four doctors. I walked the square from that time until eleven o'clock when the operation was finished. Of course I could not see her that day, but the next, only for a few minutes, but I wouldn't have known her. She is having the best of care and attention. Perhaps on Monday or Tuesday she may be able to see the children for a little while. To add fuel

to the fire, word comes from the boarding house that Dorothy's vaccination is taking like fury, so I have had to have the doctor there. Arthur has been my stand-by and his devotion is brotherly in the ideal sense of the word. You can imagine I haven't much heart to play at a concert this evening. But

Men must work and women must weep;
And the sooner it's over, the sooner to sleep.

"I'm pretty tired."

And after:

"Nobody, mother dear, but you would have been so thoughtful as to send the telegram you did today. I took it to Anne and she cried when she read it and said: 'I would give anything in the world to have mother sit by my bedside.' I tried to show her how impossible this was owing to your many home duties at this holiday season and I laid stress on the rule of the hospital which only allows visitors a little while each day.

"She agreed with me it wouldn't be considerate under the circumstances to ask you to come, but I must confess I have several times been on the point of telegraphing for you. I have been almost beside myself with pain and anxiety. We feared blood-poisoning. Had that set in, I should have sent for you at once, for in that case it would have been hopeless. Now she is doing well and must just have quiet and rest. After Christmas we are looking forward to a visit from you and father. Just tell the boys we have some claims on you, too."

Again he wrote:

"Anne is doing well, but still very pale and weak. I only missed one lesson and that came at a time when it seemed to me my mind had stopped working, so I told Katie to ask the pupil to excuse me. I went upstairs to bed and had a good cry. Yes, Mother, I cried like sixty; then I practiced for my concert which came off Saturday evening when

I was blind as a bat, but they tell me I played well. However, when I think of Anne's sufferings, I know mine are nothing. It is only sympathy and anxiety I feel, but to some natures pain of this sort is pretty hard to bear. Well, I'm not the first person to suffer nor will I be the last.

"I've postponed my two recitals; one in Boston the 28th and another in New York the 31st. So money is scarce. I don't know what the four doctor's bills will be, but this I do know—my little girl will soon be well and strong and I'll get the money some way even if I have to mortgage my royalties. And I'll do it with a light heart, too. What is this life worth anyway if it isn't given up to the people you love and who love you?

PAUL AND DOROTHY NEVIN

"Paul and Dorothy are sound asleep in bed. Arthur has gone to the theatre; and I'm reigning supreme. Artie has been so kind and sympathetic; you can never know how I have depended upon him and what a delight it is to have him here with us. He is kindness itself to Anne and the children; considerate of the servants; and he has a positive genius for remembering to turn off the electric light. Altogether he is a godsend. Wouldn't I give ducats to have you here in my workshop tonight, to talk to you? Oh, dear! Never mind. There are still good times in store for us if we only take care of ourselves mentally, morally and physically."

Again he wrote:

"Anne is doing beautifully, but the doctors won't allow her to come home before next Tuesday—that will be three

weeks. My hair has turned quite gray in the meantime. No one under heaven can know what I have gone through. But there are things I cannot write about even to you. Some day, perhaps I may tell you."

And a week later:

"What do you suppose I've been doing and going to do? First of all I was vaccinated this evening. Saturday I'm going to Springfield for the foot ball game, then on to New York to make arrangements for my recital there (the fourteenth of December, I think). I expect to be home on Tuesday to work up my programme for the twelfth, when I give my recital in Boston. At both recitals I shall have no assistance. I play the whole programme.

"I'm glad I can combine business with pleasure as I'm pretty well tired out with children, housekeeping and anxiety. But I've talked enough about myself. Anne is doing very well indeed. As Doctor Warren says, he could not have hoped for a better convalescence. Of course, it is tedious for her, but she is patient, gentle and submissive to any and everything the doctors think best. Your anxiety through all this may have cost you pain, my precious mother, but if you could know the comfort your sympathy has given me in my suffering I am sure you would be happy, and say to yourself: 'I have suffered, but I have helped those I love.' Oh, you are so good and so thoughtful. It seems to me there is no limit to your love and sympathy. If I ever loved you before, I worship you now. And I wish you could know how Anne treasures your affection. She reads and re-reads your letters, and repeatedly tells me how she, too, loves you and how helpful your sympathy has been to her. Mr. Paul has been very loving, too. He says he can't throw off the feeling of anxiety and care when any of his children are in the slightest trouble. And his letters to me have been most kind and affectionate.

"Just think, mother, day after tomorrow I shall be thirty-one. When I was twenty-one I thought I should have attained my ambition by this time. Now just see the evils the

flesh is heir to. Ten years have gone by and I am still—ambitious. Still plodding along; still in front of a wall and only commencing to see glimpses of daylight through the holes.

"Arthur is well and working hard, only I wish the boy were not so nervous. Thank you again and again for your beautiful letter. And thank you for the birthday gift. I'm sure Anne is nearly well. She actually *scolded* me this morning."

That year whitened his hair, though the boy's face, the young eyes, and the young heart went with him to the end. How he fought against the grim effects of overwork and increasing ill-health may be read in his diary:

"I have finished the "Fantasie for piano and violin." It will be the next thing I publish. Heaven only knows what will come after! I think I must be in a depressed state of mind, as I don't feel well mentally, morally or physically. I've been dosing myself with Emerson. He is so encouraging, he makes me feel I need no other tonic, but I'm sure I do. Well, I must get to work again. The terrible thing must be that I am not diligent enough."

And in that pathetic attempt to be diligent enough he was stricken down with nervous prostration and for two weeks his life was in daily danger. Slowly, very slowly he won his way back to life. And in his trouble he turned, as he had turned ever since he was a child, to his mother:

"*December 27, 1893.*

"My dearest Mother:

This is against all rules, but I'll confess to the doctor tomorrow when he comes. Things have come to a crisis and something must be done. You know I'm forbidden any work at all the rest of this winter, and my pupils have been dismissed. I'm not allowed to compose or play until after March, so you see I'm practically shut out of all work.

CHAPTER TEN

Now comes the trouble. The Doctor says Anne is very much run down nursing me and must have a long rest; and that I must either go to the hospital or leave Boston and have a complete change. I have decided to close the house and send Anne and the children to Vineacre to you, for the rest of the winter. Doctor says the best thing in the world for me would be an ocean voyage, so now I am thinking seriously of taking the boat for Genoa. It will be a great comfort to me to know Anne is with you. We have both had more than we could quite stand. Anne wouldn't want to go with me as she could not leave the children, and really Richette is not capable of the care of both of them. In case I decide fully upon this plan I would either come home in April or have Anne and the children join me in England in May. My trouble is more serious than I dare think. My brain refuses at times to act, while physically I am as well as I can be, though just now, of course, I am weak from the long stay in bed. Mr. Lang told me the other evening (four weeks ago) that the amount of composition, outside of any other kind of work, I have done in the last seven years is something enormous. The truth is *that I am worked out!* Will it be too much to ask you to keep Anne, Richette and the babies for a few months? I'll try then to be strong and well and pick up my loss of this year.

"I'm not going to try to thank you for the beautiful Christmas presents you sent us, as I'm very tired already. Please kiss my little boy and girl for me when you see them and, believe me, my own dear mother, I would not ask you to do so much for me, if I were not in sore distress.

"Always your loving son

"Bert."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

"MELODY"

CHAPTER ELEVEN

"MELODY"

ONLY once in a happy married life that lasted thirteen years, was Nevin separated from his wife and children, save for the short journeys made necessary by his concert tours. This winter, after his nervous breakdown, his physician ordered him to take a long sea voyage. So the last week in January, 1894, he sailed on the "Fulda" for Algiers, alone. Months of mental and physical suffering had tried his delicate organization to the limit of its endurance. The Nevin who went aboard the "Fulda" was sick in body and soul. Delicate as his constitution was, there was in it a remarkable resiliency; and he could swing back into what was for him normal health almost as quickly as he fell away from it. And his moral strength — rare and fine as a woman's — was feminine also in this: it asserted itself in subtle ways. In a sad and beautiful page of his diary he said that he was going away alone that his soul might re-assert itself — that in loneliness he might find himself once more. Why he chose Algiers he probably did not know — save that this edge of the monotheistic desert has often called to the troubled sons of art.

Storms met them the first day out; and for five days they were pitched and tossed mercilessly about; "the dolesomeness of five dolesome days," he called it. Then they sailed into sunlight and Southern weather and Nevin "felt more like himself" than he had done for months. By the time they passed the Azores he had regained a little of his strength and found again his mental tranquility.

> "In fact I feel so well, I hardly think of how I am feeling," he wrote to his wife, "and my time has passed in wondering what you were doing, and wishing you and my boy and my girl were all here with me."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A day or so after he reached Algiers he wrote her again, dating his letter from the 'Hotel Kirsch' at Mustapha:

> "I left Algiers proper this morning and have come up here. The air is better and it is not so depressing as it was down in the town. Then, too, I met the Whitehouses yesterday, and, as they are stopping here, I thought I would not feel so much alone. I think the ocean voyage must have upset me a bit, as I haven't felt so well since our day at Gibraltar.
>
> "Perhaps I did too much those few hours on land. I haven't done any sight-seeing; and I really haven't the energy to go into the Arab quarter. Still I have only been here two days and after Sunday I am sure I shall feel more energetic. Let me see what I have been doing:
>
> "Yesterday afternoon I went from my hotel down to the bank for letters that could not possibly have been there. Then I was passing Cook's on the *Boulevard de la République* when I met the Whitehouses. After that I strolled to the *Place du Gouvernement*, and while I stopped there listening to a military band concert, a young American girl came up and said abruptly: 'Mr. Nevin, will you kindly tell me the right *tempo* for your song, *La Chanson des Lavandières?*' If I wasn't struck dumb!
>
> "Algiers is a polyglot town, but seems in the main like a provincial French city — Lyons, possibly. Of course one sees the Arabs, Kabyles, Moors, Turks, Jews and Negroes, but they seem only as a passing show. There is a population of thirty-five thousand French and twenty thousand English and Americans against twenty thousand Arabs. French is invariably spoken, and on the streets one hears a good deal of English. An Arab became quite interested in me yesterday at the band concert. He was a fine-looking fellow, only he followed me around to such an extent, I thought it better to return to my hotel. He was picturesque in the extreme, clothed in an under garment of white camel's hair, perhaps a trifle coarse, but very white and clean. Over that was a tunic made of a beautiful cashmere rug with reds, blues and yellows predominating. His legs

were bare from the knees down, and his feet were in sandals. On his head was the white *burnouse;* above that, some ropey looking stuff wound round possibly twenty times. His hands were slim and beautiful, with fingernails polished to perfection. I wish I had his picture to send you, but to tell the truth I was a little afraid of him.

"Most beautiful of all is the situation of Algiers and Mustapha. If you can imagine tiers of houses (modern French architecture) towering up, and losing themselves in the old Moorish and Arabian part of the town. Then long streets of cocoanut palmettos, wonderful pepper-trees and the most luxuriant eucalyptus. And then there are beautiful orange and lemon trees in great abundance, though the banana-plants and the magnolias do not compare with those of Florida. But the tiled floors and white-washed walls of my suite have about frozen me. It is a pity civilization and Americanism have destroyed so much of the old Moorish and Arabic atmosphere. You hear the telephone 'Hello!' and 'Very nice'—quite Chicago-like.

"When you come with me, we will go into the interior—the first and second Oases—there we shall surely find more of the Oriental atmosphere; but Parisian fashions and the telephone have certainly robbed Algiers of its early characteristics.

"Tell Paul that this afternoon as I walked out into the country, I saw a dear little baby camel eating grass under a scrubby palmetto tree. He liked me very much, and I am sure if Paul had been here the *Mutter-Camel* would have said: 'Well, Paul Nevin, I will let you ride my baby camel just as much as you want, for only two francs a day.' Then every evening the baby camel would call and get Paul for a promenade and perhaps we might find a baby donkey for Dorothy.

"It really isn't any fun here without you, my dearest Nancy. I haven't my sweet and sympathetic companion to share the new sights with me. Never mind. Just now it is health I am after; and after that good, strong, manly work; and I'm sure there is something beautiful for us to come. Mrs. Whitehouse told me to tell you she would

take good care of me and report to you all my doings. They have stunning apartments at the Kirsch Hotel, and their carts, wagons and coach seem just like Manchester. The other Mr. Whitehouse from Newport is also here and we all had luncheon together. I do wish I could get a letter from you. I am sure you are all well, but it seems a long time since we said 'good-bye,' and my dearest *Annchen*, you are my whole life. I love you more than anything this world could give me, and even if I am cross at times my love never changes.

"I have taken a nap, had my dinner, and now at nine-thirty I'm in my room and ready for bed. I spent the evening with the Whitehouses who send their love to you. I am in a small villa about a quarter of a mile from the hotel and coming home tonight I lost my way. It was pitch dark. I passed a few sneaking Arabs and stumbled against a few pepper-trees and a stone wall and then all of a sudden a voice called out: '*Qui est là?*' I answered: '*C'est moi.*' The voice then grumbled: 'And who are you, and what do you want?' 'Only to get out of here,' I replied. Usually I am not easily frightened, but these Arabs have a cunning, untrustworthy appearance that is suggestive of almost anything. Anyhow I reached my villa in safety.

"I shall take this down town tomorrow morning and perhaps I shall find a letter from you. I do miss you all so much and I fairly long to have Paul and Dorothy in my arms. After all what is this life worth when you are separated from those who make up your life? I must turn in now, so good night. I shall be home pretty soon, and won't I be glad?"

The next letter was written a few days later:

"Just a week ago today since we landed, dear *Annchen*, and it seems a month. Still it is nicer now than it was a few days ago, as I have formed some very pleasant acquaintances. First there are the Whitehouses who are so charming, and Monday a card was brought me—Miss Susan

Hale. She is living in the same Villa, and she is with Mrs. Church, wife of the artist. They have been so very kind to me. We have driven together and I have met many of their friends and acquaintances.

"Miss Hale is a sister of Dr. Edward Everett Hale and Mrs. Church is an invalid. She has her son with her. I saw the Benedicts while they stopped here and dined with them. The 'Fürst Bismarck' struck Algiers like a tidal wave and the whole place is over-run with Chicago people. I have given up the idea of going to Rome. I want to go direct to London, and from London home early in March. Next week I am really going to do some sight-seeing, as I have scarcely been in the Arab quarter and that is the most interesting part of Algiers. If you were here you would get inside of a Harem, but the doors are closed to me. One doesn't see much Arab life, as it is completely a French settlement, and Mustapha is quite English and French. Still one does have clean beds and plenty of fresh invigorating air. I lounge around the garden mostly, or read in my room, and sometimes stroll through the town. I bought some gauze material for a dress for you. It is white with silk stripes of yellow, pink, green and gold thread. It was rather narrow so I took fifteen *mètres*. It will look beautiful over satin. The jewelry here is abominable and I am looking high and low for a jewel case. I saw one but it was too large and besides it wasn't silver. I think I can do much better when I reach London.

"Tell mother I received her good letter and it was the only one I have had. I shall ask Brown, Shipley and Co. to forward my mail to Paris, as I shall stop there a few days. I wish I knew what size gloves you and mother wear. Please send me word. Will write soon again. I am feeling so much better and commencing to have some real healthy energy again, so much so, I may go into the desert, if I can find a trustworthy, honest guide. I don't relish sleeping under a date-tree with a camel, a donkey, and a guide I can't trust. How are you, my precious *Annchen*? How I wish you were

with me. Give our boy and girl a kiss for me and with love to one and all

"Always your loving

"Bertie."

The next letter reads:

"My dearest *Annchen:*

Such a delightful surprise was in store for me this morning — your good letter, written the 29th, came, and I have fairly devoured it. Day before yesterday I had one also from mother. I am feeling better and better, and I don't go into the town but rest loyally up here. There is little or nothing to do but rest, no excitement of any kind and nothing to do but sit in the garden or listen to the funny English. Yesterday a man showed me two Arab chains. I asked him what they would cost. He said ten francs each. I whistled and answered: 'I'll give you two.' Imagine my consternation when he said: 'Take them.' I'm dickering for a pin of oriental rubies, brilliants and emeralds. The jeweler wants two hundred francs for it. I offered him one hundred but he won't budge; simply shrugs his shoulders and says politely: '*Merci bien.*' It's really a beauty, though, and I should like to get it for you. It was worn by an Arab woman who had to part with it, and it is over two hundred years old. The draperies are very expensive here and I don't think them attractive, they are too Turkish and one tires of the gaudy tinsel and bright coloring. This is the day when the Arab women visit the cemetery, but they won't let a man inside. I think I shall go into a mosque, though, as one sees very curious sights.

"Your letter made me wildly homesick this morning, and still I have such delight and happiness in having had it. I thought I should die the night I said good-bye to you. However, now it will soon be the home-coming. God bless you always my dearest *Annchen.*"

"*Algiers, Feb. 21, 1894.*

"My dearest *Annchen:*

I have been up on the house-tops watching for the 'Kaiser Wilhelm II,' as I shall go down town and perhaps see the Robinsons, if she sails today. We have had two days' steady rain and it has been dismal enough, still I've had a fire in my room and have read to my heart's content.

"I'm quite a 'beau' here, if you please. I'm invited out to all the luncheons, dinners, afternoons, and everything that is going on in the social world. Do I go? No! My great excitement is an occasional drive with Mrs. Church and Miss Hale, or the Whitehouses, who, by the way, have invited me to go to Blida with them, a two days' trip, but I promised I would have *déjeuner* with the Herrons at their villa on Friday, and as I was not able to accept the last invitation I feel I must go, especially as this *déjeuner* is given in my honor.

"On Saturday I expect to sail for Marseilles. Then a day or two in Paris—a week in London and—home! Won't I be jolly glad to be with you once more? And just let me tell you one thing, NEVER AGAIN am I going away from you for more than one week, and no ocean between! I'm absolutely lost without you. I don't believe I can repack my trunk.

"A day has intervened since I commenced this. Yesterday morning Louis Church and I walked down to Algiers, and on the very first boat came Mr. and Mrs. Robinson with Phillips. I trotted them round town and through the Arab quarter. I also met Mrs. Jamison. Then I went to a little tea-shop with Mr. and Mrs. Whitehouse and ate many small cakes, after which I drove home. But my day proved too exciting and this morning I feel 'used up'. I have just spent an hour watching two young Englishmen killing frogs in a frog-pond. What a thing to do!

"My plans are somewhat indefinite. They tell me it is cold in London and Paris, and I am advised to remain here. I don't know exactly what to do, but I will try to take things easy. I am commencing to long for some hard work.

I think that will be the best tonic for me and I shall be so glad to be with you and our precious children; and I never, never want to go away from you again. I have met some delightful English people and find them so cordial and pleasant. They are not as stiff as I had imagined. It is very gratifying to find how much my compositions are liked by the English nation. I had no idea I was so well known. The other day I heard a young English fellow whistling 'Narcissus' with more energy than discretion; but I welcomed it as an old friend.

"I am sending you a picture Mrs. Whitehouse took. The tree is a lemon and the steps are blue-tiled. My balcony overlooks this charming nook, and in the distance I have the blue and green Mediterranean. Mrs. Whitehouse took this picture especially for you. It is to show you how much better I am looking. Mrs. Church suggests I go with them to Cannes, and sail by the 'Fulda' from Genoa, but I am not sure my money will hold out as I have bought so many things. Tell mother I can't find a ring that I feel she would like. I picked up a beautiful bit of old Kabyle embroidery, which is a lost art now and so very valuable. Well, I will end this rambling letter and go to luncheon.

"How many good friends we have, my dear little girl, and if I could only have you here, I should be perfectly happy. Your love and patience have been something wonderful. All that I am is due to you, and in joining your life to mine, you have given me the greatest gift of Heaven. I shall see you soon and we will never have any more partings, but live in the happiness of our love for one another and our blessings, Paul and Dorothy."

A few days later he wrote the following:

"My precious *Annchen:*

Your letter and the lock of Dorothy's hair came this morning. The idea of your thinking the doctor's bill large! Isn't my life to you more valuable than four hundred dollars? You mustn't worry about that at all. And as to Richette, we will arrange about that as soon as I return.

"Now my little girl, we have had a hard year; and I've done no end of things that have been wrong, but we must brace up and be brave. We have so much to live for and perhaps this trial has been planned and placed upon us for some good purpose. Let us accept it and when we are together, our great love will make things easier to bear."

Mi-Carême he wrote from Morley's Hotel, London:

"Here I am on my way home, dearest *Annchen*, and already I am sure Bob has received my cable. I'm due the fourteenth, but will call it the fifteenth. I shall reach home — God willing — a few days after this; in the meantime I must have a little chat with you:

"I left Algiers last Tuesday for Marseilles, and as a poor English duffer who didn't know any French tagged on to me, we journeyed together. Some English people are so charming and some so idiotic. This morning, for instance, I remarked upon the beautiful sunshine after last night's rain, and between sips of coffee said: 'I presume it is because Gladstone threatens to resign.' Well, didn't the chap answer seriously: 'Oh, I really don't think that is the cause, you know; it must be something in the atmosphere!' After that I gave up.

"We sailed from Algiers at one o'clock on a horrid boat and reached Marseilles at five-twenty. We had to cross the city to the *Gare de Lyon* and we caught our train at six-forty-seven for Paris. Such a night I never passed. I sat up the entire time until next morning. You know what that is, don't you? Not an instant's rest. Well, I jumped into a cab upon reaching Paris and drove directly to the bank for my mail.

"Paris looked too beautiful for words. They were making ready for the *Mi-carême* festival. The piles and stacks of brightly colored *confetti* took me back two years ago, when Paul had such fun and our little blessing (Dorothy) had not yet arrived. I took the evening train for Calais and came over to Dover. Nearly every blessed soul on board was pouring his heart out — to the fishes. Excepting your humble

servant, who, by the way, was literally freezing in summer underwear and light overcoat. My poor little Englishman (who, by the way, is going to send you one of the finest fox terriers in England — a champion with a pedigree from Algiers to London) was so very ill I feared he was going to collapse entirely. I gave him some cognac which seemed to help him. When we reached London it was pouring torrents.

"This morning I flew to Brown, Shipley for mail and then engaged and paid for my passage home, cabled Bob, tried to find a jewel casket for you and drove in a hansom behind a runaway horse to Schott's.* For a few moments I thought we would turn over the Thames embankment. I tried to jump out, but something told me to wait and finally our horse was stopped. I was scared silly. I'm fearfully unstrung. I have not slept for three nights and I feel as ill as I did last December, but the voyage home will rest me. I went meekly into Schott's music house and said to a cross-looking old fellow: 'You people have re-printed some of my music, and I should like very much to see the titles. My name is Nevin.' Well, I wish you could have seen the effect. They absolutely stopped trade; and the manager came rushing out and actually embraced me. I was so nervous after my runaway drive I could hardly stand, but the compliments poured on me, and people came right and left to stare at me; and some planted themselves in front of me and simply drove me beside myself. Then we came to business. He went on to explain there was a big law-suit going on over my music which they were trying to protect; that other houses were printing 'Narcissus,' 'Oh, That We Two Were Maying,' Stevenson's songs, and others; and that they (Schott's) were not able to protect themselves as they had no copyright and so on. I couldn't do a thing but tremble. I'll try to tell you of it when I see you as this is such a long letter. But I feel quieter now.

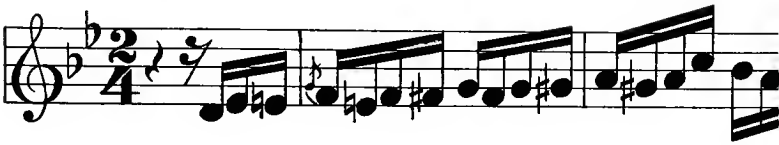
"I tell you, my dearest wife, fame may be a great thing, but it has to be bought at a terrible price; and I'm paying the full. Soon I trust I may be with you and then I can

(* The music publishers.)

rest quietly and I have so longed for the touch of a loving hand. My dependence upon you is more than you can ever know, so if Ethelbert Nevin is now going to do any great work you must be brave, and determined that he shall. This letter is abominable in every way, but you must pardon it."

CHAPTER TWELVE

"MAGGIO IN TOSCANA"



CHAPTER TWELVE

"MAGGIO IN TOSCANA"

WANDERING troubadour as he was, it was one of Nevin's theories that the highest happiness is to have birth, life and death in the same house. Whenever he could he went back to the old home at Vineacre.

Indeed, in the last month of his life, when the shadow of death was already upon him, he made, alone, the long journey from New England to the Sewickley Valley; and there, in the silent home, a place of mourning now, he lived for a day with his memories—and went out again into the world to die.

So after his return from Algiers he spent the summer months—in analeptic idleness—at Vineacre.

Very few of his compositions date from this year. He published only the Four Songs (to which he gave no opus number) *La Vie*, "The Merry, Merry Lark," *Ti Saluto* and "In the Night." In the winter he made a concert tour—the most successful of his public career—in the East and in the Middle West.

A little of the enthusiasm that greeted the composer and pianist may be sensed in an excerpt or two from the contemporary criticisms. *The Musical Courier* said of his New York concert: "The most representative audience, musically speaking, of the week gathered at Chamber Music Hall on Wednesday afternoon, to the Ethelbert Nevin Recital. They mustered so many score strong that after the body and gallery of the hall both had been packed by the upstanders, the overflow had to take room in the hallways. They were here by the score, from the young woman who thumbs 'Narcissus,' to the keen and highly educated musician. They all came for Nevin and they got their Nevin, 'full measure and running over' to a surety. But as the young composer is at his very best as Nevin, playing his own works charmingly, there was none too much of the in-

dividuality, and it was altogether one of the most delightful concerts in light and aerial vein heard in a long time in New York.

"Two Études, in form of Romance and Scherzo, opened the programme. The Romance has a Lisztian flavor, a singable melody set to a left-hand accompaniment, which Mr. Nevin played well. His left hand almost seems in better training than his right, as was emphasized later in Chaminade's "Lisonjera," where the theme in allegro is given to the left hand and was one of Mr. Nevin's clearest bits of playing.

"A group of his own short pieces was delightful: a 'Harlequin,' modeled on Schumann's, a 'Love Song,' 'Song of the Brook' and 'In Arcady,' the latter divided into four short numbers, in which 'The Shepherd's Tale,' a bit of garrulity within the compass of two octaves in its first part, was original and very clever. Mr. Nevin won unstinted applause, and when for the Rubinstein 'Barcarolle' he substituted his own 'Narcissus' the house came to its feet."

A critic of fine competence, Mr. Samuel Swift, recorded his appreciation in the *New York Mail and Express* — a charmingly worded and very discerning appreciation:

"Ethelbert Nevin stands almost in a class by himself. His genius is essentially poetic and in complete accord with the bright and beautiful things of life. Blithe, happy and with an instinctive love for light rather than shadow, his fancy turns to the free, the gay, and the less strenuous motions. He is a sort of musical Watteau, limiting his subjects to the more artificial phases of existence, yet informing his work with exquisite art and the truest simplicity. The beauty of his work is accounted for by the fact that the subject appeals to him. He does not need to force his music, and in fact would be the last man in the world to do so. He has simply turned whither his desires led him. Artificiality is absent, because music is the direct expression of his natural emotion. He achieves results worthy of serious consideration from subjects that in unsympathetic or Philistine hands would be fruitful of no inspiration.

"It would be an injustice, however, to say that Mr. Nevin limits himself to the sort of work just mentioned. The lyric rather than the dramatic is his stronghold. He has shown himself capable of freighting his compositions with strength as well as grace, and his sense of proportion is as well defined as that of beauty and color. The quiet attractiveness of nature moves him more than does storm and stress. The loveliness of a Spring morning wakens in his mind music that has its own place in the world. The merry dances of Mayday are, to him, joyous expressions of bubbling happiness; and he finds spontaneous language in the tone world to mirror the effect produced on him."

So far the critics; but his own opinion was, — and he wrote it to his wife — another thing:

> "This whole business is nonsense and we must get abroad. If I were ever content with my playing, I presume I should feel very good about myself. In Buffalo I had a big house, but it took me some time to 'warm up.' After the 'Fantasie,' I had six recalls, and when I played that nasty little 'Narcissus,' there were cheers. I played better than I did in Pittsburg, but last night in Rochester I had a perfect ovation, and I don't know when I have played so well. In one of my numbers the gas in the hall went out. I heard quite a little rustle of confusion in the audience which threatened to become panic, but I kept my self-possession and finished my work in total darkness. When I was through, the people simply were wild in their enthusiasm. To keep them quiet until the lights were arranged I again played that mean little 'Narcissus' and it was so still in the hall, I felt the audience could almost hear my heart beat."

Nevin was never to fulfil that first dream of his youth; he was never to become one of the world's greatest pianists, but this season he rose to his highest point of virtuosity, and although he abandoned his pianistic ambition to interpret other composers, he was to play in public many times and in many lands, but more and more he drew towards the ideal of interpreting his own compositions.

CHAPTER TWELVE

During these months of health-gaining at Vineacre, he had questioned his genius more closely. More than ever he realized that his work in the world was to write beautiful music. That he might do this in the best way, he needed to be released from the high-tensioned activities of the concert room. He wanted a serener atmosphere. He was to find it, as so many artists have found it before his day and since, in Italy. There is in Italy a charm, an inspiration, for certain delicate souls — and reverently they accept it — which is very difficult to define. It does not come from the beauty, which is, as it were, realized and fixed in Italian verse and music, and in the cities and the hills. The charm of Italy is subtler and more rare. It is in the very air that the poesy—to use an old and comprehensive word—exists; poesy in a sublimated state, essential, untouched by circumstance.

The mystic soul of Italy! It called to Shelley, as it called to De Musset and to Chopin. And Nevin heard its compelling call. Italy was to complete, or rather to perfect his lyric genius.

His message to his generation was one of love, of tenderness, aspiration — a direct message without exegesis. He might have used Blake's words (for with Blake he had much spiritual kinship):

I give you the end of a golden string:
Only wind it into a ball,
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate.

And this message (like Shelley's) was to be spoken most distinctly from Italy. The early part of the year Nevin passed in Florence. He found there his cousin the Reverend Dr. Robert Nevin, rector of St. Paul's in Rome, and:

> "Cousin Robert was most kind to us and he insists that we shall go to Rome for the coming winter. He suggests having an apartment arranged for us in his wonderful house (really belonging to St. Paul's) and that the Vestry give me the apartment in exchange for my services in training the choir. I think he has quite fallen in love with Anne, as

he gave her a beautiful dinner-party where there were princesses and marquises galore!

"Anne looked stunning and won many friends.

"Did I write you of the delightful dinner I had with W. W. Story? Poor old man. They hardly think he will live through the summer. They were so kind to me, and one of the greatest pleasures I ever had was to play for Mr. Story. His chair was wheeled into the drawing room and I sat down at a piano that had been played upon many times by Liszt, Rubinstein and every great musician of our time. I sang for Mr. Story, the English songs father likes, and the tears came to his eyes, and he whispered almost to himself—looking like a ghost — 'I wish I could summon the spirits of those who have made music in this room.'

"He told me he had tried some twenty publishers before he could get one to publish his *Roba di Roma.*

"Cousin Robert asked me to send his love to Uncle Robert. He has great family pride; and even with all the honors that might and would appeal to superficial people, the man has led a lonely life; and you can have no idea how he has clung to us. He seems devoted to Cousin Alice and his reverence for his father's memory is an example for every son."

And to his publisher, Gustave Schirmer, he wrote:

"*Hotel Allianza, May 29, 1895.*

"My dear Gustave:

Ever since your good letter came, I've been intending to write to you, so I shall not let the glorious Decoration Day put in its appearance until my letter has been posted.

"We've been having the very coldest weather, to say nothing of the most terrible earthquake. I wish you could see my music room—great crevices in the walls, ceilings and one corner almost demolished. I embarked with my cousin, Doctor Nevin, for Rome at 6.40 and the nurse who has charge of the children had gone to the theatre. At nine

o'clock my wife was sitting alone in our little parlor when a terrific noise, like an explosion, occurred, followed immediately by a movement that made the pictures and mirrors sway and the lamp almost upset on the table. She had presence of mind to blow it out, rushed for Paul and carried him downstairs, as he was awake screaming with fright. Then she returned for Dorothy, bundled her down (still

Mrs. Nevin and Children in Florence

sound asleep), and they passed the night by the front door. People were literally panic-stricken, and carriages and wagons were hired in which many passed the night. It only lasted five and a half seconds, but two or three more would have been awful. They telegraphed for me and I returned home at once.

"We have had two or three slight shocks since, but no damage was done excepting to widen the openings already made. I haven't the slightest idea what the next novelty will be.

"I've done some compositions since I have been here and will soon have a large bundle of manuscript to send you. I'm posting by this mail a small scene for pianoforte of which I hope Gertrude will accept the dedication. The 'Pantomime' I have changed to 'Italian Scenes' as I've some other things to go with it, that are not pantomime, a 'Nocturne' and 'Quasi Tarantella,' for instance.

"Write to me as often as you can, and do send me any papers you don't know what to do with, as there is almost an absence of letters; in fact, when one really does come the excitement is intense.

"Remember me to your wife and little ones, and with warm affection for yourself,

"Always your faithful

"Ethelbert N."

And again:

"Dear Gustave:

Between you and myself and the ocean, I'm sick and tired of this earthquake business. Night before last we had to decamp and sleep on the piazza in front of our hotel. The whole thing is so absurd and, it seems, so utterly useless. Our last shock came about 1.55 Thursday morning and such a time as we had packing our youngsters down stairs; and the excitement of the people rushing to the street in all kinds of undress! I think the municipal authorities of Florence should at least compel the men to wear pyjamas. I was eminently respectable; and I had on everything even to my letter of credit. If we had had another shake, down would have come our house. It seems ludicrous enough afterwards, but at the time it is the most uncanny thing imaginable. Fancy the house on Union Square swaying twelve inches and you feeling that another hair's breadth will topple it over. To cap the climax I've been trying to learn to ride the bicycle and you would have pretty nearly burst a blood vessel with laughter, could you have seen me take the 'header' I did the night of our last big quake. It was about nine P. M., and flattered by my

little *maestro's* praise—'*molto bene! bravissimo signore'!!* off I careered, simply floating in the air. All of a sudden something seemed to put my wheel in a bad humor and it stopped and I took the most beautiful 'header' you could possibly imagine. When I collected my various legs and arms I found my trousers torn, my left leg skinned and I was oh, SO sore. However, the right side of my anatomy is uninjured and I'm going to master this silly thing, if it takes my other leg.

"In spite of the small-pox, earthquakes, bicycle pains, and all, I've done some nice things in the composing line; and I am sure you will be pleased with my *Maggio in Firenze.*"

"If it's coming to me, please send me five hundred so I may celebrate the Fourth of July in Montepiano. I'm buying a donkey for Paul. He's a stunner and his owner has come down from three dollars and seventy-five cents to two fifty. Then we have a dog—Piccino—who at present is learning parlor manners at a private *pension,* which is conducted and personally superintended by Pietro's wife. Pietro is our butler, valet, nurse, Baedeker and Chesterfield. He has a grandson about my age, and when he isn't otherwise occupied, he lies outside the door of my music room and listens to my music. He thinks I am a very great artist—poor duffer! He can play the Intermezzo from the 'Cavaleria' himself and he simply worships 'La Gioconda.' If he were younger I'd take him with me to Boston.

"*Terramoti e tutti,* I love Florence and adore the Italians, not once have I ever had anything but courtesy and kindness shown me; and I've intimate friends among the cabmen; while my little *Hans Sachs* cleans my boots and compliments my Italian. Anne has a flower-gentleman who calls her '*signorina*' and presents her with bunches of roses—such roses!

"I don't know of any person I would so much like to have with me here as you. You would heartily enjoy a sojourn in Florence.

"We went this afternoon to see the della Robbia 'Singing boys.' Have you a photograph of them? I think they

would look well in your music room. *Ecco!* Greetings *von Haus zu Haus.*"

In June Nevin took his family to Montepiano in the Tuscan Apennines, five hours by diligence from Florence.

"It is the funniest, out-of-the-way place you have ever seen; and I really think we are the very first Americans to go there. It is high up in the mountains and the quiet is almost terrifying, but we hope to gain a lot of health and strength to tide us over the coming winter."

And again, July 3, he wrote to another friend:

"I imagine you today with your arms full of torpedoes, sky-rockets, fire-crackers and Roman candles, with which your youngsters will make merry tomorrow. The only way we can celebrate here is to wear a knot of our colors, and perhaps take a drive in honor of the day.

"You would be amused if you could see us living with these Tuscan peasants. If you were here you would love them as we do. This little place was all excitement and consternation when my grand piano arrived. I had engaged a room that lies between the stable and the *salon* for a studio; and as I worked at my music I was visited (through a window barred like a prison) by all the people of the village, from the priest to the pigs. In fact my window was darkened by little bronze faces, red kerchiefs, and beautiful black eyes, until I was obliged to close the piano and depart. After a while they will become used to it, or at all events I can resort to curtains, which we may be able to purchase at a little town about five miles from here.

"Our only companion is a charming old lady, the Countess Peruzzi. She is most interesting. At her brother's home in Pisa, Lord Byron visited long and often; and it was there, with Shelley, that he wrote of Keats in reply to that scurrilous article—in the *Quarterly* wasn't it? The Countess was a friend of Von Bülow, Wagner and many great Italian composers, and seems as though she had stepped out of a time that has been usurped by our present matter-of-fact existence.

"We have mail once a day, when we are in luck and the mules aren't stubborn; and when the afternoon coach arrives the whole place is a scene of excitement. There are never any strangers, but the mere fact that that particular vehicle has come from Florence is enough to make everyone stare in wide-eyed wonderment.

"This pretty little spot is conducive to thought and impression, but I'll confess it does not give one much energy for execution."

Then to his mother:

"Dorothy was ill a few days ago. The doctor came twice but it was only a summer complaint, and now she is running around with roses on her cheeks and eating like a little pig. She's a plump, good-natured dear little girl. Every person likes her and bends to her. She is rapidly becoming spoiled, but how can we help it? We have great sport telling her about a 'Ginger-be-nooster' who eats up little girls when they are naughty. I wish you could see her eyes, when I talk to her of this terrible animal.

"Zéline knows every person, and the flowers she has made for a fair to be held for the benefit of mutes are the delight of the village. She is our main-stay. Never a complaint, always cheerful and thoughtful. She was out walking with the Marquis the other evening but I don't propose she shall become Madame La Marquise. The Marquis and Paul are great chums and take long walks together. We are so sorry he leaves us today. . . . We have just had our afternoon prayer and a little reading aloud. Zéline, Paul and Dorothy have their little prayer each day, and while Paul knows the Lord's prayer in French, he doesn't yet know it in English. I remember so distinctly and vividly how you used to bring us together of a Sunday afternoon and have us read a little from the Bible. At times I am confident it would have been much easier for you to have had the repose and quiet of your own room. Your self-sacrifice is now finding its reward in my beautiful memory of those times; and Anne and I are trying to make our little ones feel the necessity on Sunday of a time when they should have a

little communion with the Supreme Being. Thank you, my mother, for the help you have given me by your untiring faithfulness to your son.

"We are all well and happy. We have our little times of trial and trouble but they always blow over again. Anne will write to you soon and remember always that this small branch of the big Vineacre tree love you and are so happy that they belong to and have sprung from just such a root."

In the little work-shop, with barred windows, he wrote part of the *Maggio in Toscana*, Opus 21, notably the "Pastorella." It was published in 1896, "with homage to my master, Karl Klindworth." This suite no more than any other piece of absolute music has any need of words. Indeed "descriptions" of music — which is in its essence non-descriptive — are usually mere snares for the more facile literary emotions. While this is true enough, there may be exceptions. One afternoon Nevin played the "May in Tuscany" for the writer of this page; and, as he played he told of the emotional impulses that lay behind the building of the suite — the moods, as it were, of his work. It was a charming self-revelation; and he who listened put down in words his impressions. They are printed here because Nevin used them, thereafter, in his concert programmes, thus giving them the sele of sincerity.

MAGGIO IN TOSCANA

I. ARLECCHINO: *molto vivace*

It was Harlequin, Harlequin, Harlequin,
Son of the rainbow, he,
Who was born at the dawn of a golden sin
In the arms of a virgin sea;

A riant Harlequin, nonchalant, riotous, amiable — loquacious and canorous as a bird in the season of love; the Harlequin of Florence and the Springtime.

II. NOTTURNO: *con amore*

Night in the Villa of Boccaccio; overhead the quiet stars and far below the yellow

lights of Florence; ladies, strangely merry and desirable, dance blithely and whisper little vows of love; cavaliers, splendid in silks and jewels, peacock to and fro, and chatter of broken hearts, and so they play at love until love smites them down. They kiss and sob under the quiet stars.

III. Barchetta: *allegretto gracioso*

The sun is setting and the dull Arno has shining hints of red and gold; under the old bridges it shimmers like silken ribbons. The boat glides softly. The girl croons the song of the waters, which is the song of hope that comes and goes and lives and dies and cannot die; and the lover drops his oars and the boat drifts — down the winding Arno — under the old bridges — into silence and the night.

IV. Misericordia: *largo patetico*

Once a young girl died. All in white they laid her on a bier. At midnight wailing men bore it on their shoulders — amid flickering torches — through the silent streets along the Lung' Arno and up the great highway that leads to the Duomo. And after the bier came many girls in white, bearing wax candles that burned feebly for the soul of the dead. As they came to the Duomo they heard the chanting of the Priests and the organ.

V. Rusignuolo: *andante, quasi improvisamente*

All winter the nightingale sang in the garden, insolent among the flowers, a zany of the blue night. Only his song was supple as sadness and sad as a reproach — for he was a zany of the blue night.

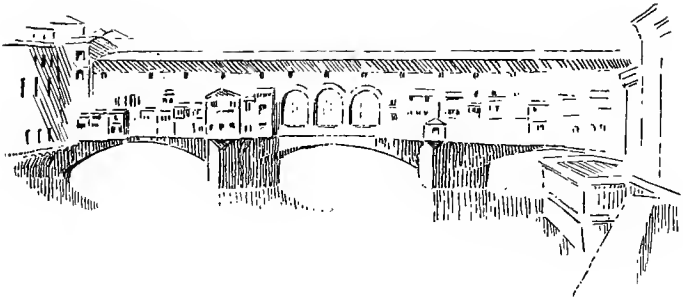
VI. La Pastorella: *lento molto*

She was a little shepherdess—a woman like a field of clover. It was in Montepiano, in the Apennines. Her soldier lover had been sent away to fight King Menelik. She mourned for the lover whom she had loved too well. She wept at times because she could not go to the priest. She knew that her soul was lost for love's sake and she mourned. Her sheep strayed on the hillside; her staff lay at her feet unheeded; with her face on her knees she thought of her lover; of Menelik's fierce men, and thinking of her lost soul she shuddered and cried aloud. On the gray hillside.

And Nevin said: "Through the window of my music room I could see the little maid, as she sat on the hillside, guarding her sheep and waiting for her lover to return. In the village no one spoke to her and the peasants mocked her. My wife and I did what we could for

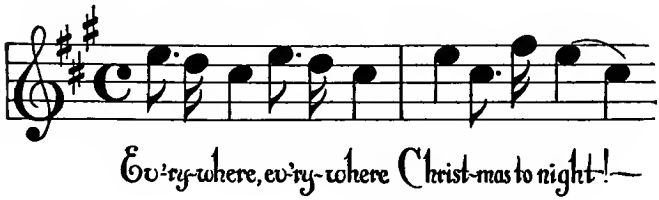
her; but what could we do? Her gratitude was touching. One day she came and told us that two lambs had been born at dawn, and asked if she might name them after our little children.

"It is strange how people pass like that, just on the edge of one's life," Nevin added, "and are seen no more; and afterwards through the years one wonders, wonders why they should have appealed to one with so imperative a voice. They become in a way a part of one's inner life — like the nightingale that sang in my neighbor's garden."



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"EVERYWHERE, EVERYWHERE, CHRISTMAS TONIGHT"



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"EVERYWHERE, EVERYWHERE, CHRISTMAS TONIGHT"

FROM Montepiano to Florence once more; the Nevins drove down in an open carriage, the grand piano in an ox-cart trailing after. They took, for the winter, a suite of rooms in the Hotel Allianza:

"We have three rooms—a music room, which serves as a parlor, and two bedrooms. We had hoped to have an apartment. Of course we are disappointed, but there is no use complaining — one can so easily acquire that bad habit.

"Anne is busy trying to master the art of tapestry embroidery, and I'm afraid she will lose her eyesight. It is the most intricate thing imaginable. This summer she has done some of the most beautiful needlework I have ever seen.

"Paul starts to school next Monday where he will have Italian and French, also a gymnasium. His hours are from nine till three. Dorothy has lessons every morning—ten minutes for alphabet and half an hour for sewing. She has already learned a number of little verses, and in the afternoon, about five, when work is over, Paul and Dorothy come into the music room. Paul can recite the last part of 'Thanatopsis.' Dorothy says her little French poems; then we have a singing lesson for a little while; after that we end up with a dance. We are trying to learn the Tarantella.

"Florence is quite deserted and we are the only people in this hotel. We dine at noon, altogether; then a light supper at seven, the children having theirs at six. . . .

"This letter was interrupted by a call from Paul's *maestro*. He is a charming old gentleman and has a manner like Uncle Joseph Travelli. He is a Frenchman and was exiled from France (some political trouble) and has lived in Florence about thirty years. He prepares boys for Har-

vard, and we feel we are very fortunate in having him take charge of Paul, as our boy is very young; in fact, will be the very youngest pupil in the school.

"I've commenced piano lessons with Paul and I don't think he's very musical. I'm just as glad. It is an exciting and unremunerative kind of life.

"There is almost a water famine here; and in the churches prayers are being offered for rain. The Arno is quite dry. Poor Florence! She has suffered a great deal in the past twelve months. You have never seen such poverty. And the Nevins are right in it!"

Drawing of Ethelbert Nevin
By Charles Dana Gibson

Pleasant days withal; there was a very charming social life in the Florence of those days. The American Consul was Charles Belmont Davis, and his brother, Richard Harding Davis, was there for the winter season. The Labouchères and the Dana-Gibsons, the Paxtons, the Breretons, Thomas Ball, the sculptor, the Parkman Blakes, Boardman and Gerhart Hauptmann and Vivarelli; and many others made up the artistic and cosmopolitan society of Florence that winter. "Ouida," an old woman then — painted and fat, amazing in a purple gown, wearing white plumes in her hat and followed by many dogs, was a familiar sight in the *Cascine* of an afternoon. Nevin (he records it in his diary) was walking one day with his little son, along the Arno, and "Ouida" came up and stopped them.

"Oh, the *bellino*," she cried, "I must kiss him!"

The little boy drew away from her and would not allow it; and to his father he said indignantly: "I don't even know her!"

Nevin's comment in his diary was this:

> "I wondered if that grotesque figure — that cruel, hardened face — was all that was left of the *heart* in which was born the 'Dog of Flanders.' Poor woman!"

And this life of Florence, with its social moments and its shifting personalities is recorded in his diary.

There, too, he wrote of his home life:

> "September 25. Morning very warm — I cannot work. Afternoon, intolerable heat; we idled a long time over tea. Paul came in from school, and Dorothy wanted to dance with him. Poor little Dorothy. I never know in what language she is going to end a sentence; and her English is absolutely 'unique.' She will say '*Grazia molta*,' '*Vous êtes si gentille*,' and 'I you sank (thank) ferry mutch.' Paul, however, speaks the three languages with a fluency that is remarkable. He has school every day from nine to three. It seems to me pretty long hours for a boy not quite seven. We shall have to see how he stands it. We always have a dancing lesson when he comes home, and he can waltz very well. Then a 'repose' lesson. That is the hardest of all for Dorothy. We sit still for five to seven minutes, say nothing, think nothing. After that comes a singing lesson and then a romp. But today Dorothy was in one of her little petulant moods. Her eyes were just snapping as she jumped up and said: 'I won't repose any more!'
>
> "I said to her very firmly: '*Miss* Nevin'!
>
> "She put out her little chin and replied just as firmly: '*Mr.* Nevin'!"

This is the long-ago record of a quaint comedy, always kept alive in the family. All his life, he and his little daughter addressed each other as "Mr. Nevin" and "Miss Nevin," even to that last day when she stood at his bedside and he said goodbye to little "Miss Nevin" for the last time.

And again the diary:

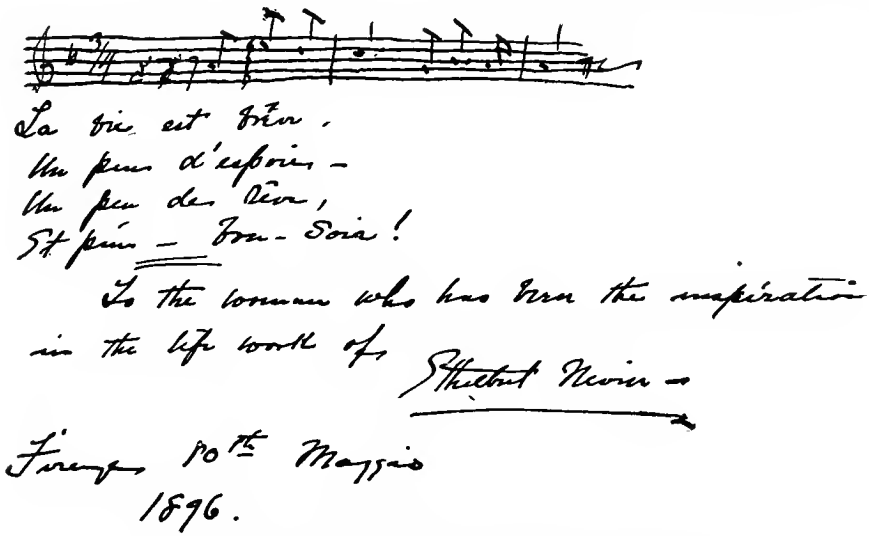
> "Paul will start to school tomorrow. He's the pride of my life. Dorothy is cunning, sweet and loving. Oh, I have so much to be thankful for, but still I am always wanting something more; and I am not contented with my blessings. I seem to be ever pushing—feeling and grasping for something that I cannot express unless it is to find in this life the—truth!
>
> "Today I corrected and mailed the proofs of my new compositions and I shall not see them again until they are out in the world to make friends or enemies. I always feel as though I were sending one of my children to fight a battle when my manuscript has gone from my hands.
>
> "Wrote a song on text by Baumbach, *Mädel wie blüht's.* Christmas season sad and gloomy. I was taken ill Christmas morning and was in bed nearly all the time till New Year's Day.
>
> On the 27th of December, I passed the night with departed spirits. Such an experience I have never had before and I trust it will never be repeated."

This is all he says in his diary of the curious experiences of that winter illness. Very strange (and difficult to put in words) was the thing that befell him Christmas eve. Upon that occasion he seemed indeed to have broken through "the paper walls of everyday circumstance," these unsubstantial walls that prison us round from the cradle to the grave.

It is natural, too, it should have happened to him on the eve of the great day of devotion and mysticism—the day the Child was born. It was late and the lights in the music room were dim. He was alone—for it was only after she had heard him playing, that his wife had slipped quietly into the room; and her he did not see. The piano stood in a bow-window and the moonlight fell upon him as he sat playing.

Very softly he played and sang "Everywhere, Everywhere, Christmas Tonight;" then he wandered off into strange improvisa-

tions. He played things, his listener said, more wonderful than he ever played before or after. And while he played all the dream-children of his beautiful songs came and gathered round him in the shadowy room. He seemed to SEE them all. And it was for them he played the new, strange music. He spoke to them in a confidential voice saying: "This is for you, Little Boy Blue;" and then turning to where Wynken and Blynken and Nod stood together, he would say: "And now this is for you—just for you three alone." And the wonderful music went on. One after the other all the



FACSIMILE OF ETHELBERT NEVIN'S HANDWRITING

children of his songs came to him—the little girl whose doll was broken, and the little boy who got up at night—and each of them he welcomed with smiles and gentle words, and to each he gave the gift of music, new and sweet.

The only witness of the scene wrote: "I, who was listening as he played to them and talked with them, was so awed, I held my breath. I realized for that space of time Ethelbert was not of this earth at all. There seemed to be a pale light round his head. His face was so spiritualized I should not have been surprised if he had vanished then."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

When the ghostly concert was finished he went to his room and did not leave it for many days. Then came that night passed "with departed spirits." The next morning he sent for his physician, Doctor W. H. Baldwin of the *Villino Rubio.* They had a long conversation. There is a trace of it in a note Doctor Baldwin wrote a few weeks later:

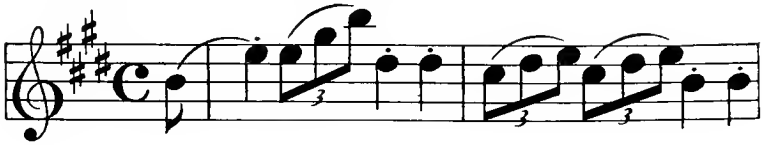
"I am very sorry I missed your visit today. Among other things I wanted to make a note of your extraordinary fancies, which could have occurred only in a poet's brain. It seemed to me that one might attribute those rainbow visions to the effects of Influenza; would you, could you, jot down a sketch of them for me?"

Thus spoke Science, solving the unsolvable; and Nevin wrote:

> "I know I have given a great deal of pleasure to others in this world. When my summons comes to join the Caravan I shall be quite ready. I shall not be sorry or glad. I shall simply accept it. Without those very nerves that cause me suffering, I could not write a tune that would be worth listening to."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

"A DAY IN VENICE"



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

"A DAY IN VENICE"

"VENICE, Casa Chiodo, Grand Canal; June of 1896! Here we have been for nearly four weeks and our housekeeping and gondola life is fascinating. Have many acquaintances here, and there is a good deal of gaiety. Have had interesting visits from Sybil Sanderson, Andrew Carnegie and many Pittsburgers. Our gondola is a beauty and when Giovanni and Gurdo get on their white duck suits with straw hats, yellow sashes, yellow ribbons on their head gear, we make a fine show as we go out to the Lido for an ocean bath these summer afternoons."

Thus the diary; but those Venetian days should be seen, I think, in the mirror of Willa Cather's prose. The quotation is from the article in the *Courier* to which reference has been already made:

"Last of all, Nevin played for us his 'A Day in Venice,' which is rivaling 'Narcissus' in popularity. He lived in Venice for a year on the Grand Canal, and today a big, black gondola glides in and out of the ancient waterways with a spray of yellow jonquils and the name 'Narcissus' painted on the prow. The Venetians have been a music-loving people from time immemorial, and Nevin's old gondolier saw fit to commemorate his sojourn in Venice in that poetic fashion.

I. Alba—(dawn)

The first movement begins with a few drowsy harmonies, as the sun touches the spires of St. Mark's with fire, and the gondolier rouses and stretches himself in the sunlight on the steps of some old church where he has been sleeping. The lagoons are silver, and a thousand scents are in the air, and the freshness of morning is upon the water. The gondolier laughs—at nothing—at everything; at life and youth—laughs because the sky is blue and the sun is warm, laughs for joy at the gladness and beauty of another day—a day in Venice.

II. Gondolieri — (the gondoliers)

"She to me
Was as a fairy city of the heart;
Rising like water columns from the sea,
Of joy the sojourn and of wealth the mart."

BYRON

The swing of the paddle is in the first measures, the rhythmic theme haunts one, carries one out upon dream highways fairer even than the waterways of Venice. It is a short cut to poetry and dreamland. The gondoliers are off for the day, out upon the historic waterways, gliding down the Grand Canal, under the arched stone bridges, through deep, still streets where the stone walls on either side are mossed with age, and the shadows make the water green, and the air is cool—and out again into the broad sunlit lagoons. It is in Venice, where people believe in happiness, even at work, and the gondolier has no other creed. He is not ambitious, he desires nothing but to be always a gondolier, as his fathers were before him. He will live a little, laugh a little, love a little while he is young, pray a little when he is old; what more would you have? Perhaps he has heard how one of his forefathers, long gone, carried guests down those same waterways to the *fêtes* of the Palace of the Doges; perhaps that he carried some doomed victim of the Forties out into the Adriatic and brought him back no more. But that, and all the dark history of Venice, is forgotten in the sunlight and the swing of the paddle and the rhythmic, haunting melody of the gondolier's song. Life is good on the lagoons.

III. Canzone Amorosa — (venetian love song)

The love song is written in the key of A flat, the key in which beautiful things happen. The work of the day is over and the gondolier has his little sweetheart beside him, and in all the world there are but two people and the moon. It is a safe and happy love song, yet there is an intense fervor in the opening melody, for he has been away from her a whole day—and that is so long—sometimes. The second subject, softer, more tender, than the first, rising to a climax in one voluptuous, languishing chord over which, in the score, the composer has written: *Io t'amo!*—"I love you." Few greater things are written now-a-days than that love song.

IV. Buona Notte — (good night)

As the gondolier and his sweetheart glide out towards the Adriatic they pass an old church from which an *Ave Maria* is sounding. Perhaps the lovers sing a snatch of the hymn, perhaps the little girl crosses herself. Night sleeps deep and peaceful over Venice, the lights glimmer behind them, the moon draws a little fleecy veil over

her face, like an abbess who demurely draws up her surplice. They are happy and they hope that all the world is so."

Once Nevin put his musical creed into words:

> "Above everything we need melody — melody and rhythm. Rhythm is the great thing. We have it in nature. The trees sway and our steps keep time and our very souls respond."

And it is in the Venetian Suite that this theory has found its finest fulfilment. It gains a distinctly Italian color, as Rupert Hughes points out, "from its ingenuously sweet harmonies in thirds and sixths, and its frankly lyric nature; and the 'Day in Venice' begins logically with the dawn, which is ushered in with pink and stealthy harmonies, then 'The Gondoliers' have a morning mood of gaiety that makes a charming composition. There is a 'Canzone Amorosa' of deep fervor, with interjections of *Io t'amo!* and *Amore* (which has the excellent authority of Beethoven's Sonata, Op. 81, with its *Lebe wohl!*) The Suite ends deliciously with a night scene in Venice, beginning with a choral 'Ave Maria' and ending with a campanella of the utmost delicacy."

'A Day in Venice' was not published until 1898. It was signalled as the daintiest bit of lyrical writing for the piano that many years had produced. It was *du vrai Nevin*, so delicately worked, so full of reticences and second intentions, so subtle in its craftsmanship that it affords the critical student charming moments of analysis. Indeed, the Suite with its skilful musical characterization, its melodic color, the splendor of its harmonic embroidery, yields up its full charm only to the analyst or the poet. It is a delicious inspiration, worked out with consummate skill.

But Venice — The Nevin's found many friends there; among others Herbert Faulkner, the painter of Venetian scenes, and his young family; and the Morton Mitchells. Morton Mitchell, one of Nevin's closest friends, rhymed, in a polyglot ballad, the gaiety of those days — and nights — in Venice. Nevin linked to it a rippling tune and it was sung from gondola to gondola, until even the gondoliers and the

barges caught it up and sang it lustily — to a queer jargon of their own — as Nevin's boat, decorated with yellow jonquils, floated by.

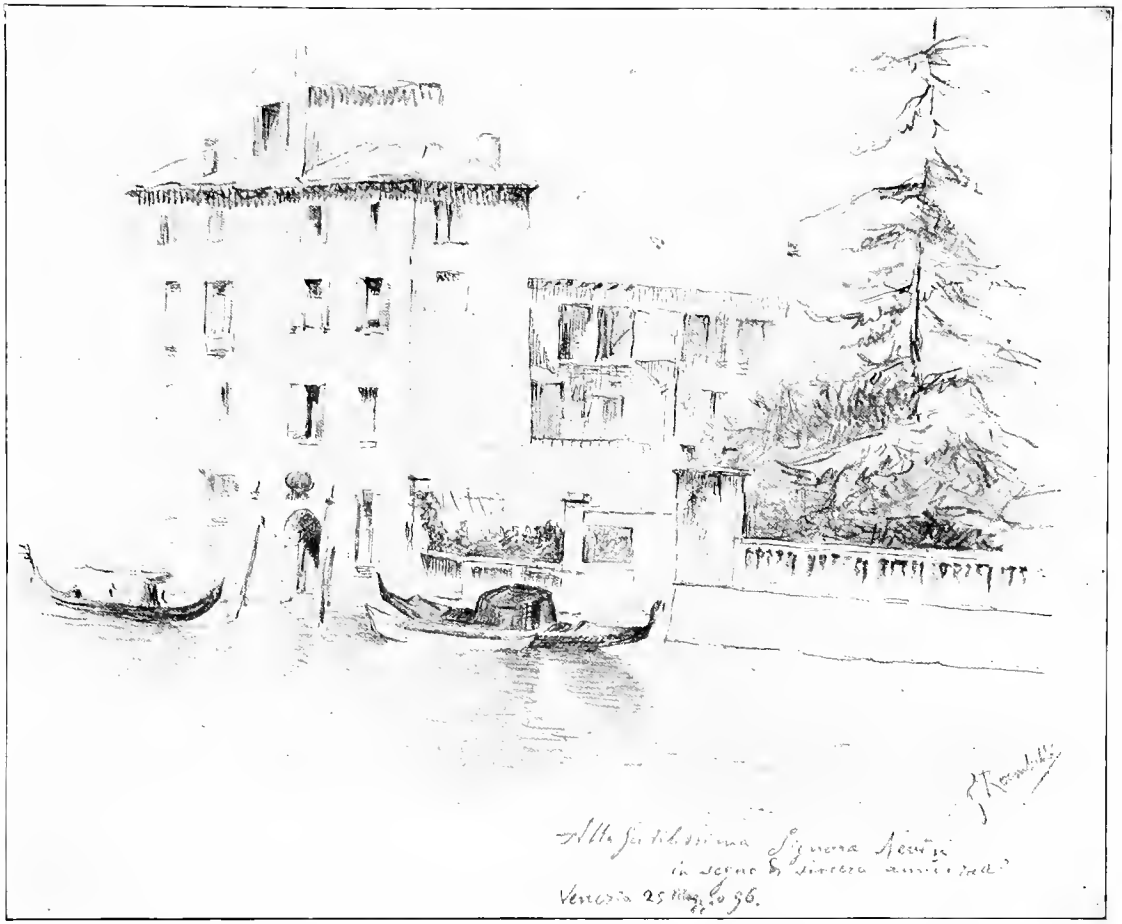
Here it is —

Venedig ist ein anderer Stadt
Since the Nevins came to town —
Der Sonnenschein ist ganz mehr hot
Since the Nevins came to town.
Das Wasser scheint a deeper blue,
The sky takes on another hue,
I'n 'y a que gaieté partout,
Since the Nevins came to town.

The song-boats have all gone out of biz —
Since Nevin's in the city.
The singers drink water where they used to drink fizz;
Isn't that a pity?
For all the Dutch and Inglese in town,
And Venetians as well, from the Prefect down,
Crowd the Canal till you'd think they would drown
To hear a Nevin ditty.

Traghetto men no longer fight
Since Nevin's come to town —
They sing all day and drink all night,
Since Nevin came to town.
And of the gondoliers a score,
Are always floating round his door
Calling and shouting for 'More' — 'Encore' —
Since Nevin came to town.

And yet, while telling these terrible lies,
About the Nevins here in town,
Do you think we wish it were otherwise
Than to have them here in town?
Corpo di Baccho! We don't indeed!
Our love for them is our only creed,
And if they went off, we'd all secede,
We ALL would leave the town.



THE HOUSE INHABITED BY ETHELBERT NEVIN DURING HIS STAY IN VENICE

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

So far as publication went the *bilan* of his compositions, during the Italian sojourn, was not large. He printed only the two songs, *Mädel wie blüht's* and *Rechte Zeit*; but to this period belong the two Italian Suites — the Florentine and Venetian; and they show better, it may be, than anything else, the two-fold side of his nature: the insinuating tenderness which rises often to the white heights of passion; and the grave and abiding melancholy. The musical form, too, is very characteristic. It is pure Nevin; one recognizes it at a glance —like a friend's handwriting on an envelope.

As was once said: "Ethelbert Nevin wrote like a man who had an orchid in his buttonhole and the fear of God in his heart;" it was a phrase like any other, but it defined in a way, his music, which is at once aristocratic, delicate, chiselled; and informed with great tenderness and a melancholy peculiarly his own.

And it seems to me that in these Italian Suites one sees Nevin at that moment when his genius spoke the most personal word — they reflect the white soul, the proud purity, the passionate heart.

* * * *

"Five uneventful weeks at Fontainebleau," the diary states; not wholly uneventful for the lovers of Nevin's music, for there he wrote the first number of his suite, *En Passant* (Opus 30.)

In a home letter he wrote:

> "We've engaged an apartment in Paris and if this cool weather continues, we shall move in about the end of August.
>
> "Anne and I went into town and on the *rue de la Paix* Anne saw a coachman whom she thought was the one we had had the week before, who seemed such a decent fellow and didn't beat his horse. She hailed him and found out he wasn't the same. However, we got in and I took him by the hour. Well, we went to one apartment after the other. Finally, we became tired, hungry and discouraged, as we could find nothing that suited us. At last I told the coachman to drive to a *café* that I knew on the *Place de la Made-*

leine, and I think he read distress and discouragement in our eyes, for he turned from his box and said: if Monsieur would like, he would drive to an apartment he knew was for rent, as his stand was near it. I rather *pooh-poohed* the idea of a Paris cabman recommending an apartment to a well-bred American family. Anne, with her common-sense, said: 'Well, Bert, we might just as well see it.' So I said: '*Allez donc*.'

"Well, we saw the apartment, just the location I wanted —off the *Champs-Elysées*,—only one flight of stairs and at present occupied by Professor Palmer, whom I knew and who knew me. It is a beauty. We will have an entrance hall, two *salons*, a dining-room, four bed-chambers, a kitchen, maid's rooms and so on, for four hundred and fifty francs a month, all furnished. Emma Eames lives just round the corner and the whole thing is fine. It is *38 rue Galilée*. Did I tip that coachman well? I did. I gave him forty cents and he beamed all over. He saved us eighteen francs railroad fare for another hunting trip to Paris."

In this home, *38 rue Galilée*, near the *Avenue Kléber*, Nevin did a great deal of work. It was there he wrote the *Chanson d'Automne*, that haunting setting of Verlaine's haunting song, still in manuscript, and *La Lune Blanche* from Opus 28. There was a great deal that was akin in the art of Verlaine and Nevin; and the great French poet found in the American composer his most delicate interpreter. In the *rue Galilée*, too, was written part of *En Passant*, Opus 30. In addition to composing, he gave much of his time to "coaching" Wagner singers and to his piano pupils. It was a happy year, active and bright. Paris held many of his friends. Cousins from his home city were established just across the street. For a few weeks in the summer he was left alone, while his wife accompanied her parents on a trip to Venice and the Italian lakes.

To her he wrote:

"I dreamt last night that Paul and I, with Giovanni (the gondolier), were standing at the entrance of the Grand

Hotel and I saw you all come up. You seemed glad to see us, and I was sorry I woke just as Father and I were starting for the Lido. Well, my dear little girl, it is pretty lonely. Paul and I sat for a long time by the window, when he had said his prayers. After he had gone to bed, I read and watched the moon. Nothing is wrong — it's only that I am lonely for you. Give my love to Venice. Oh, wouldn't I give ducats to be there. Just to say the 'I love you, Bert,' which you wrote in your letter from Lugano, was a beautiful touch, my precious wife; and it is a thing I want more than anything in the world or in life.

"The little ones are well, and your domestics are doing everything they can for our comfort. It's just plain 'loneliness'! I have about made a decision to take Guido. I sent him to the Italian Consulate this morning to find out his rights and my rights. I told him I could do nothing definite until the *signora* came home.

"Yes, I'll send you what money you want. If it isn't as much as you'd like, well, that's life, my little girl. Don't you remember the song I wrote for you, *La Vie?*

"I am quite determined you shall come home as soon as you possibly can. You must be here by the 20th.

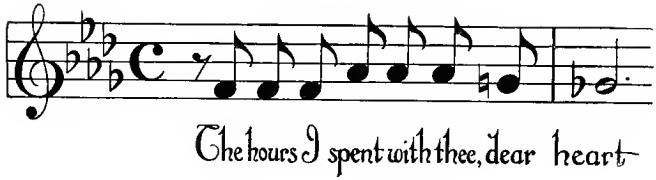
"Now be a good girl. Keep your pretty face clean, and when you are inclined to worry just remember you have the love and worship of your

"Bertie."

Then in the autumn of the year Nevin sailed away from Europe for the last time. He reached New York in October, with, as he said to an interviewer, a wife and babies, two canary birds, a greyhound and an Italian boy-in-buttons.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

"THE ROSARY"



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

"THE ROSARY"

HE was thirty-five years old, but the years had left him young. He had still the boyish face, bright with enthusiasm, mirroring every emotion — all his thoughts of beauty or sadness. (Many artists tried, but none ever portrayed it.) Above the young face and blue eyes was a great mass of dark hair thick-sown with white. He was slim, graceful in every shift of his flexible body, but his nerves — even as when he was a little child — were keyed to a pitch of almost painful intensity.

This was Ethelbert Nevin, as he faced the New York public once more after those fruitful Italian days, after those keen Parisian hours.

He gave three concerts during the season. Of the first recital a critic wrote:

"Tuesday, while spending an afternoon with the compositions of Ethelbert Nevin, I probably came as near as I ever shall to a simultaneous absorption of color and sound. The concert was given in the Madison Square Concert Hall.

"Nevin's music is eminently colorful, though he deals in the half-tones and hinted shades rather than in the spectrum.

"The concert began at four o'clock and there was a long program, but it was none too long. And in fact, though it was varied and cunningly put together, it did not show every side of the composer's genius. It showed, however, those sides of it which the public like best. There were twenty songs — those marvelous lyrics in which he condenses that strange personality of his, at once sad and tender, mystical and gay. And then there was that puissant suite for piano, *Maggio in Toscana,* so mutable in its moods, so individual in its modulations, so rich in its musical matter.

"The interpretation was not all that it might have been.

"Occasionally a butterfly was broken on a wheel. This was the

case with that exquisite fragility, *Le Vase Brisé.* In the main, however, Mr. Nevin's interpreters served him faithfully, if not brilliantly. Mr. Francis Rogers sang, *Rappelle-toi*—an intimate transcription of Musset's well-known poem—with a great deal of feeling, and the song was quite within the limits of his voice. He was equally happy in *Rechte Zeit.*

"To Miss Genevieve Weaver was intrusted the interpretation of four songs in a lighter mood. Of these I like best 'A Fair Good Morn'—I am haunted yet by that phrase, all badinage and coquetry.

"The audience by this time, mightily enthusiastic, was in just the mood for the *Maggio.* And it was a pleasant sight to see the composer in front of a Steinway grand. The ideal state of things is to hear a composer play his own music. Strangely enough—for it is unusual—the leading American composers (MacDowell and Nevin) are equipped with thoroughly adequate virtuosity.

"MacDowell plays more like the devil. Nevin plays like a poet. His playing is not mechanically brilliant; it is very individual, extremely subjective, intensely poetical. He gets exquisite subtilities of tone—as in that sad and charming *Notturno* and the capricious *Rusignuolo.*"

At another concert, given at Carnegie Lyceum, Nevin played his "May in Tuscany," Mrs. Julie Weyman—one of his most delightful interpreters—sang a group of his songs, and Miss Isadora Duncan "illustrated in classic dances" the Narcissus, Ophelia and Water Nymph of the Water Scenes; and for the first time "Floriane's Dream," a pantomime by the writer of this biography, with Nevin's music for piano and orchestra, was given.

Meanwhile Nevin had taken a studio in Carnegie Hall and an apartment at 221 West 57th Street.

There he wrote "The Rosary."

Many legends, all fanciful and charming, have grown up round this world-loved song. Its true origin is quite as interesting.

All the highest expressions of lyric beauty are impulse-born, even

as Shelley's "Indian Song" which came he "knew not whence." The history of "The Rosary" is almost as simple.

One evening he sat with his wife, reading the day's letters. In one of them—a letter from one of his childhood friends, Miss Elizabeth Dickson of Sewickley—was a clipping from a magazine, on which was printed Robert Cameron Rogers' short poem. It needed no second reading for Nevin to recognize its lyric beauty. In a few minutes he had it by heart, and he walked up and down the room, repeating:

The hours I spent with thee, dear heart,
Are as a string of pearls to me;
I count them over, every one apart,
My Rosary, my Rosary.

Each hour a pearl, each pearl a prayer,
To still a heart in absence wrung;
I tell each bead unto the end,
And there a cross is hung.

O memories that bless and burn!
O barren pain and bitter loss!
I kiss each bead, and strive at last to learn
To kiss the cross;
Sweetheart!—to kiss the cross.

The next afternoon he came home from his studio. He handed his wife the pencilled manuscript of a song with this note:

"Just a little souvenir to let you know I thank the *bon Dieu* for giving me you. The entire love and devotion of
Ethelbert Nevin."

That was a way of his; many of his compositions he presented to his wife—always with a few written words.

Few richer gifts were ever so lightly given. Then he sat down at the piano in the winter twilight and sang the song for her, "The Rosary." It was not published until many months later.

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In making up the programme for his recital in Boston, near the end of the season, Nevin decided to include this manuscript song. Mr. Francis Rogers in "Musical America," May 2, 1912, gives his recollection of what took place:—

"About a week before the Boston concert, I was dining at the Nevin apartment, in West Fifty-seventh street. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Skelding, Mrs. Nevin's brother-in-law and sister, were present. After dinner Mr. Nevin handed me a scrap of music paper with some notes and words scratched on it in pencil and said: 'I want you to sing this in Boston next week.' It was 'The Rosary.' As the scrap of paper in my hands was the only written version of the song in existence, and the time for preparation was short, Mr. Skelding said: 'Bert I'll bet you a champagne supper, you can't get that song ready for your Boston concert.' Mr Nevin accepted the bet, rehearsed me carefully in the song, which a week later in Boston had its first public hearing."

It was Mr. Rogers who, for the first time, sang "The Rosary;" the concert was given in Steinert Hall, Boston, in February, 1898. It was sung for the first time in New York by Mrs. Julie Weyman, at the recital in the Carnegie Lyceum, March 24, to which a reference has already been made.

In her diary for that year Mrs. Ethelbert Nevin notes: "Monday, May 2d, took 'The Rosary' to Schirmer this morning!"

Today the song is sung in almost every language; there is no hint of exaggeration in saying that it has journeyed round the world and round again. There has been written more about it than about any one song; but it may not be superfluous to quote here part of an article by Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink, which appeared in the "Bohemian Magazine":

"The one song I love best in all the great song literature is Schubert's *Die Allmacht*. But there is another song the public loves better to hear me sing—'The Drinking Song' from Donizetti's 'Lucretia Borgia.' And there is still another song that I love and

which the public delights to hear, I call it my favorite American song: it is Ethelbert Nevin's 'Rosary.'

"Why do I like to sing 'The Rosary?' Because it is a perfect song. The critics may not all agree with me there. But the public is the best critic after all, and the public likes 'The Rosary;' not only the American public, but the German public. If I ever have a chance to sing it in Italy, or Russia or Austria, I am sure it will be liked there, too. You can always trust the public to recognize a great song.

"The essentials of a really great song are heart interest and beautiful melody. Nobody will deny either to this song. The poem recites a soul tragedy to which the composer has achieved a musical setting, exquisitely conceived in the lyric mood and expressed with simplicity and directness.

"The song is so familiar, I need not describe how Nevin has expressed this story of an aching heart in music. But if you study the melodic outline of the song, it may surprise you to discover the connection that exists between the poet's imagery and the musical form. All of us do not *tell our beads*, as the saying is, but we know that the rosary is a string of small beads, with a larger one strung between each set of ten smaller ones. Now notice the composer's phrase, how it slips along in the eighth notes, just as the small beads would slip through our fingers. And at the end of every such phrase comes a long note and a pause. This is repeated over and over after the manner of the pious devotees of the rosary. Now observe the melodic outline of the climax on the line, *To kiss the cross—sweetheart—to kiss the cross!* This first part is sung on one note. The voice goes up and then down on the word *sweetheart*, and the concluding phrase is sung on the 'fifth' in the first line!

"When I went to Europe last winter I was honored with an invitation to sing for the Kaiser. He was entertaining the Queen of England, and I was asked to the palace to sing while they had tea. There were none present but His Majesty, the Empress and Queen Alexandra. I sang several German songs, and then, like a good Amer-

ican citizen, I sang 'The Rosary.' The Kaiser is not only a good musician but a composer, and he liked it immensely and asked me to sing other American songs. The German critics were not as greatly impressed as the Kaiser by my American songs. But the German public went wild over 'The Rosary' and compelled me to repeat it every time it was sung. And remember, I sang the words in English, so to a majority of my hearers the appeal lay in the music and not in words. So I have the popular verdict behind my judgment of 'The Rosary' as a great song.

"Here in America it is the song I love to sing best. It is one of the few songs I sing in English, and I know that every word of it will go straight to the heart of every listener. It has always the same effect. There is a spontaneous burst of applause as the audience catches the first familiar phrase. Then comes silence that grows tenser and tenser. I can see and feel on every face before me that what is in my heart is in theirs, and we are both swept along in artistic transport to that anguished cry for a happiness that has escaped us. A song like that, to make all hearts beat together, is a work of genius."

The original manuscript of "The Rosary" is in the Congressional Library at Washington; it was given by Mrs. Ethelbert Nevin.

And the season went by with concert-giving and composing. In April he wrote to his publishers:

> "I'm going to orchestrate the whole suite of 'In Arcady' for full orchestra. Now, do you think it would be wise to print the score and parts, or to retain them for the moment in manuscript? I want to have the thing finished as soon as possible, and Spicker has promised to assist me. Some company at Newport wants it for a 'Mid-Summer Night's Dream' performance; I shall have to pay Spicker for this work, and don't you think the Boston Music Company could demand a bonus for the performance of the music? I believe it is to be done in the form of a ballet.
>
> "What do you think about 'The Serenata'? Is it better for me to put down the other movements?"

And the next letter dated from Vineacre in June, tells its own story of overwork and broken health and fragile nerves:

> "I am picking up gradually, but still feel pretty weak. However, I take a long early morning walk, a salt bath, a good breakfast and then towards noon a horse-back ride; and I drink so much milk, I'm afraid I shall turn into a wet-nurse."

Health came back very slowly, but by mid-August he had "conquered those unruly nerves," and was once more hard at work in his music room. Then came the greatest shock of his life. His mother died. And when she died a little of his own life went away from him. He was never as he had been before. In his last written words to his wife he said: "I have given my two loves: one to mother and one to you." That was very true. And his love for his mother was a part of his very being. When he was a boy in Berlin he enclosed in a home-letter a private page, marked "for my mother;" and it read:

> "*Berlin,*
>
> "*September 14, 1884.*
>
> "My dearest Mother:
>
> I have been longing so for you this evening, and it seems almost impossible for me to stay here without you. I would give anything in my power to be near you now and take your hands in mine and lay my head on your knee, for never in my life have I felt such safe and peaceful moments as when I was by your side. I have always felt safe from any care or temptation and, my dearest mother, you can have no idea how, at times, I am almost wild to be near you and feel the touch of your hand on my head like a benediction, guarding me from all harm. I am so lonely at times, that I think my heart will break. But I know I have much to do and I must not give in to loneliness. Do, do take good care of your precious self. Don't overwork and tire yourself out, as in your unselfish way you are inclined to do, and oh, my darling mother, pray that I may have strength to bear this separation from my dearest mother."

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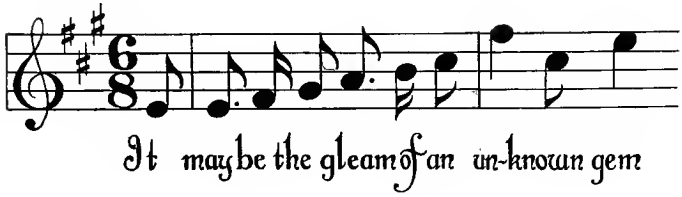
When she died he went down into the shadows. Slowly and manfully he fought his way back to the common sunlight and the daily things of life. Loves and duties aided him.

He wrote his wife:

> "I believe in fatality. This morning I was walking from father's room, the front door was open and I saw a young woman with a long, black veil just mounting the front steps. In a moment she was in my arms. Yes, it was my arms that welcomed the little lady of Vineacre. We stood a moment, her head on my shoulder and I said: 'Lily, little sister, it isn't the time to cry.' Wasn't it strange it should have happened that in place of mother's arms, it was mine that welcomed her to her dear old home. Fate!
>
> "I have that dull pain, but I can pray. I think mother sees us both, and I am sure she is saying: 'Be brave, children, and remember love is with you always!'"

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

"THE QUEST"



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

"THE QUEST"

"YOU can have no idea how I miss you. It seems to me as if I were some other person. Oh, my dear little girl, I am dependent on you. Miss Cather was right. My melodies are you; my harmony is you! Of course I'll write you the 'Love Song'. I'll do the whole thing in manuscript if you want it, and I'll put a touch in here and there that will be entirely yours:

Thy presence brings to me sweet rest,
Thy hands bring soothing to my brow,
Thy words such sympathy avow,
Thy going leaves me all unblest.
Abide with me.

"Paul has been just as good as he can be. He is with me constantly, and we seem to cling to one another. I shall wait till I hear from father before I send Paul on. Father won't go, and I don't think it fair to leave him alone. We have had some beautiful hours together and he rather depends on me. Good night, my little girl. May God bless and guard you. My life is yours and yours alone. Paul sends a sleepy message from his bed, 'My love to mama.' Perhaps one of God's angels will carry it to you from dreamland."

This letter Nevin wrote from Vineacre, one evening, to his wife who was away on a visit. The reference to Miss Cather hardly needs an explanation. There had just been published in the *Courier* her article of sympathy and charm—"An Evening at Vineacre"—from which quotations have already been made. And in these words she pictures the composer's life at Vineacre, during those latter years of his short life:

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"Queen Anne's Lodge"

"To Aready, has't never been?
Hark, while I give the mystic key,
The password that shall let thee in
To Aready!"

"Now and then one finds one of Mr. Nevin's earlier songs 'dedicated to Miss Anne Paul.' Miss Paul is now Mrs. Nevin. When the composer returned from his long sojourn in Europe, last year, he decided to work at home for a time. He was tired of wandering and tired of excitement; he had a brain full, and a heart full of material, and he wanted to settle quietly down and use it. Then he fitted up 'Queen Anne's Lodge.' A music room! It is a house of song, rather, a five-roomed cottage across the fields from Vineacre, and someone has called the vine-covered walk that leads to it, 'The road to Arcady.' There is a music room, a study, a bedroom—with severe little iron bedstead, a bathroom and a kitchen. There are divans and easy chairs, and Turkish rugs and an old Venetian lamp, and desks and a concert piano, and shelves of music and copies of old pictures, portraits of Wagner and Chopin, and Mr. Nevin's own portrait done for Mrs. Nevin by Charles Dana Gibson—such a collection as an artist brings home when he returns from going to and fro in the earth and from walking it up and down. There the songs of the Vineacre series were written, and there so many more are being written. There I heard his 'A Day in Venice' while it was still in manuscript.

"It was twilight, and some half dozen of us were seated about the room when Nevin began to sing. First came a love song in Italian, not yet published. Then a song to words of Catulle Mendès, also yet in manuscript. Then he warmed to his work and sang, because he wanted to, and the songs came one after another without preface or prelude: 'The Rosary,' 'O, That We Two Were Maying,' 'When the Land was White with Moonlight,' *Dites-moi,*' 'Twas April,' 'A

Ethelbert Nevin's Music Room at "Queen Anne's Lodge," Vineacre

Fair Good Morn,' 'The Mill Song,' 'The Necklace,' and 'There Little Girl Don't Cry.'

"He really seems to have written all the songs one greatly cares for, this man, and when you stop to think of it, there is seldom a concert anywhere at which one does not hear a song that, at some time or other, has come from 'Vineacre.'

"There was only candle light in the room, lamps are never used there. The composer's face was in the shadow, but the light fell on that noble head, and touched the hair already gray with the labor of giving compositions to the world during the past ten years. Gray hair above a face so young, so lyric, so mobile is a strange thing to see. It is as though the kiss of the muse had left its visible mark, and tells that, if his wooing of her has been happy, it has not been altogether painless. His wife sat leaning against the piano, in black and white, looking more than ever like one of the more tender and compassionate of Botticelli's Madonnas. Somehow Mrs. Nevin has always seemed to me a good deal like her husband's music. There is in her something of the same idealism and delicate sympathy and sweetness. Perhaps the music has grown to resemble the woman, perhaps the woman has grown to resemble the music, but in fancy I can never quite separate them.

"The music went on and on, for two hours as mortals count time — I don't know on what system they compute it on Parnassus or in Arcady, but a Greek said that sometimes the hours of men were the years of gods. The stars came out, and the frogs kept up an accompaniment outside, perhaps from some pool into which, years ago, Nevin looked and found Narcissus.

* * * *

"In the afternoon, as we all sat upon the porch at Vineacre, the talk ran hither and thither, and some of us were drifting into a discussion of utilitarianism, when Mr. Nevin's father spoke up, as one having authority, and said calmly: 'We are all creatures of sentiment, we live and die by it, dispute it as we will, and it is the strongest force there is.'

"The remark set me thinking. I fancy, it explains Ethelbert Nevin and his music. In his childhood he was never taught to be afraid of sentiment and he has never learned to fear it. That is why his musical invention is so singularly free, why the influence of no school has ever touched him, why in all his music he is so entirely and gloriously himself. If MacDowell is King of France, this man is King of Navarre. He has a province of his own in the music of the world. No other man has ever set foot into his kingdom; it is wholly his own and he is the only man of all men living who can tell of it. His message is for his lips alone, no other could ever speak it. His work is unique among the world's beautiful creations. He carries so much of our pleasure and delight under that hair that is tinged with gray. His harmony and melody are his own, like no one's else. He has no affectations; he is not afraid of simplicity, of directness. As someone has said, his melodies 'gain a certain distinction from their very unconsciousness of the danger of vulgarity.' To everything he writes, however slight, that rare grace and distinction cling; an aroma of poetry, a breath from some world brighter and better than ours; an exhalation of roses and nightingale notes and Southern nights.

"Take, for instance, the little negro melody he did for the Dartmouth college boys; if anyone else had written that it would have been cheap. Is it? Try it, and see. Even in his children's songs there is the same grace and tenderness. What he touches he dignifies. Of a simple lyric he can make a noble tragedy. And he has the courage of genius."

There, in "Queen Anne's Lodge," were written almost all the compositions of his Opus 28; there "The Captive Memories" were written and the group of Five Songs — "An African Love Song," "Mighty Lak' a Rose," "To Anne," "The Woodpecker," "At Rest;" there he wrote his suite for piano, 'O'er Hill and Dale,' published also after his death. Those last few days of his life were a mingled web — the shadow of his mother's death was over him, and he had hours of brooding sadness; from them he would rouse him-

self to the keenest activity. It was as though he had hints and premonitions that the time in which work might be done was growing very short. For months he worked at his "Fantasie for piano, violin and 'cello," writing, rewriting, building, rebuilding, with that determined patience which only the man of genius knows. (If his was inspirational music, as the phrase goes—if his melodies have the spontaneity of birds on the wing—he was none the less a composer whose science was ample, whose grammar was impeccable, for him who knows how to read; 'Bach,' he said once, 'is my daily bread.')

The "Fantasie" was left unfinished—as Keats left unfinished his half-hewed masterpiece. More nearly completed was "The Quest," which William Foster Apthorp discerningly pronounced "one of the best things he ever did, if not the best." It was first given, by the Boston Singing Club, Mr. G. H. Tucker conductor, two years after the composer's death.

It was, at the request of Mrs. Nevin, scored by Horatio W. Parker. It was given with pianoforte accompaniment, although the composer had intended to orchestrate it. A portion of Mr. Apthorp's critical appreciation may be quoted here:

"The text by Randolph Hartley, is in an exceedingly poetic, imaginative vein, approaching the ballad in form and general style. I incline to lay stress upon this, because Nevin evidently took it in the ballad spirit. And, in this vein, the composer shows himself singularly at home. Say what one will about Nevin's place as a composer, this much seems incontestable: with the possible exception of Mr. MacDowell, he was the one American composer of note in our time who had a genuinely lyrical gift. Added to it, he had, and knew how to infuse into his music, an enormous and penetrating personal charm. In this cantata he, accordingly, has done what a strongly lyrical bent and personal charm could do."

There were to be few years more at Vineacre; and 1898 and 1899 passed—in a struggle against ill-health, in a struggle to complete the orchestral works that lay so close to his heart; happily, too, they

were passed in that atmosphere of home and home-companionship, in which alone he could breathe freely.

But home was no longer the same. He wished to be near his father—"he seems to lean upon me more every day." And his own more intimate circle of wife and children was broken, for his little son (school-ripe, now) was in a military academy at Dobb's Ferry. Of course letters could be written; and here is one:

"*Vineacre, November 27, 1899.*

"My dear little man:

I had thought that I might pass this week in New York, and, if Mr. Rogers would permit it, take you over to New Haven to spend Thanksgiving with godpa Billie and Norman Sturgis, but I find I can't get away.

"It is very cold here this morning, and I wouldn't be surprised if you have ice at Pocantico Hills.

"By the end of this week the football season will be over. How do you men feel about Saturday's Princeton-Yale game? I hope you will have Harvard in mind for your college, as you ought to pass your exams in 1908 or somewhere around that time.

"I had a birthday on Saturday, and what do you suppose the Slack girls did? They had a surprise cake-walk for me in their new music room—Jean, Carolyn, Elizabeth, Annie Reed, Margaret, Dorothy, Doris, Mary Anderson and Bettie Dravo. Then there were Aunt Grace, Mamma, Uncle Bob and Aunt Martha all in costume. It was simply fine. Dorothy was the funniest of all. She had on a Paris pink bonnet, a big white feather from Florence, a calico skirt and a black sash. She looked like an Irish cook, just landed. They had a birthday cake, with candles (37) and we ended with a Virginia Reel.

"We are all very well and we shall think of you on Thanksgiving day. Be a good boy—

"Always your loving

"Daddy."

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Often letters seemed poor, cold things; then Nevin would unexpectedly take train for the East. On one of these trips he wrote to his wife from New York:

> "I came in from Dobb's Ferry last night. Paul has to make up twenty demerits. That means I have to go out again tonight and simply wait until he is permitted to leave. I imagine the discipline is good, but it's tedious work for me. I think we shall leave Tuesday night, unless our little man gets more marks. After supper last night, twenty of us men (the schoolboys) went out to see the eclipse, and the company marched me to the station singing 'Narcissus,' 'Little Boy Blue,' 'In Winter I get up at Night.' It was the most beautiful compliment I ever had in my life. The boys all seemed to like me and called me 'Paul's Gov.'
>
> "Such a lesson as I have had, my sweetheart, and a new ambition in my life. I felt that I should take off my hat to all the boys, and breathe a little prayer that God would make me a nobler man. I walked to Tarrytown and went to Sleepy Hollow. Bought Rip van Winkle and forgot all about 'Ethelbert Nevin, Composer' and took myself back to my boyhood days when I was just 'Bertie Nevin, aged eleven.' I tell you the Catskills, Washington Irving and Joseph Jefferson were a combination that made my hair curl. Somehow, all the time I say in my heart: 'O memories, that bless and burn!'
>
> "Mr. Peter Gilsey has invited Paul Nevin and his Gov. to come and see his collection of pictures, and we are to have a fine time with some of the people we read about in Mrs. Drew's reminiscences. Oh, my lady, I wish you were with me. I wish I could grasp your hand and tell you that you are 'my string of pearls' and that you are the mother of the most wonderful boy that ever lived. *Gott sei Dank*, he is like you."

And another time—it was in September 1900—Nevin took a room in the school itself, that he might be near his boy for a little while, and live as near as might be the boy's own life. And to his wife he wrote:

"We had a terrific storm last night and at 8.45, when I was sitting in my room reading, the gas went out all over the building—such a turning-off of gas-stops as there was—and I could hear the boys in the other wing having the time of their lives. They had a few candles in the house, and I got half a one.

"Yesterday afternoon I did enjoy sitting by my window reading, and out on the lawn was our little man, practicing, with all his little heart, on the bugle. Then we had a walk and a talk, and at a quarter of nine he threw his arms about me and said, 'good-night.' And then the house was as quiet as death."

Nevin gave a few recitals, a very few, chiefly for charity; on one such occasion he wrote from Beach Haven, New Jersey:

"My dear little daughter:

In this same envelope you will find a little card. It came to me from a whole lot of little girls, with the biggest bunch of beautiful roses you ever saw. They were all little Pittsburg girls, like Jean, Carolyn and my other little friends.

"I took them on with me to the boat, and as I was leaving they sang: 'There, Little Girl, Don't Cry,' and I almost cried myself. Tell Ethelbert Paul that his letter was kind and manly. I'll write to him very soon. When does he return to school? I am playing tonight for the benefit of the orphans of sailors.

My heart's best love—yes, more love than you can ever know. Always and always

"Your loving

"Mr. Nevin"

And this chapter may end with another letter, for Nevin was to write very few more—very few:

"*Dec. 5, 1900.*

"So you are twelve years old today! Well, my little lad, you can never know how thankful I am that you are

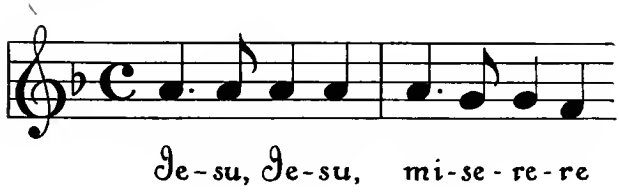
my son, and your twelve years on this earth have been one of the greatest joys that has come into my life.

"Be brave and manly, and remember I am always and always

"Your loving father."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

"JESU, JESU, MISERERE"



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

"JESU, JESU, MISERERE"

LATE in the autumn of 1900, Nevin went to New Haven. There were many reasons why he chose this quiet city for a winter home. He had very dear friends there, among them Dr. William Sturgis; he wished to be near the military academy, where his son was a student; near, also, to New York, where he intended to give a number of piano recitals of his latest compositions. He took apartments at 40 Trumbull Street, and sent for his wife and little daughter. While they were still *en route* he wrote this letter:

"*40 Trumbull St., New Haven, Conn.*

"*October 21, 1900.*

"My dear little man:

I am anxiously awaiting Mamma and Dorothy. My piano only arrived last Thursday. Your letter was a delight to me, and I sincerely hope you will gain credit every day, and when the time comes that the Major says you have earned an outing, just trot along to me, and remember my heart is with you all the time.

"My 'glad hand' to all the boys—

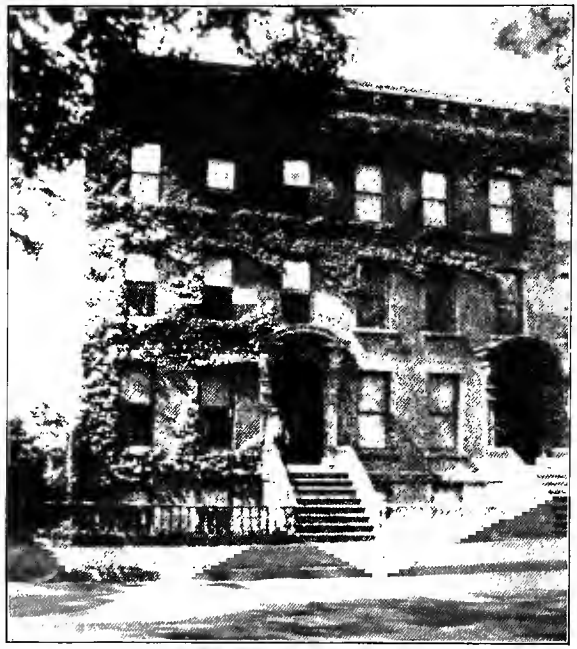
"*A toi*

"E. N."

He lived very quietly, rarely leaving his studio, save for a walk with his little daughter; often he walked alone for hours in the snowy streets. He, who had always loved the sun and the summer, seemed to discover an unknown magic in the white New England winter. And he knew all the children. In a few weeks the children of the neighborhood had accepted him as an equal. Mrs. Wells, in whose house he lived, told of seeing him in the street, having a lively snow-balling bout with a dozen boys.

"He was the youngest of the group," she said, "and he looked the very spirit of the snow, so ethereal in face and physique he was."

Then he would go back to his studio and to the unfinished manuscripts on his desk—working with a sort of feverish energy, at his "Fantasie," sketching new songs—that were never to be sung on



THE HOUSE, 40 TRUMBULL STREET, NEW HAVEN, CONN., WHERE NEVIN DIED

earth. One of these fragments was found on his desk, after his death; the words he had chosen were:

Heart of mine sleep,
There is only calm in slumber.

His health seemed no worse than it had been for many years. He was wasted and his strength had failed a little; but he was filled with bright activity, with an alert and loving interest in everyone

Ethelbert Nevin's Last Music Room, at New Haven

with whom he came in contact. Only the dark hours were darker; for hours he sat musing at his piano, playing very softly. One day in January of the new year, he said to his wife:

> "I am going home, dear—I must go, for a day, and I must go alone. I have a premonition that something is going to happen. Unless I go, I shall not see father again."

And in a storm that was almost a blizzard of wind and snow he journeyed—not for the last time—to Vineacre. He talked with his father for a long time. He spent hours in his mother's room and in the room of his childhood. Then in the early evening, all his kinsfolk and many of those who had known him as a boy, gathered in the great room at Vineacre and he played for them and sang the songs they loved. For that evening he was "Bert" once more. He returned to New Haven, January 16.

"It was a beautiful visit," he said, "I am at peace."

A few weeks after his return he wrote to his son, Paul:

"*Feb. 12, 1901.*

"My dear little man:

You are having a beautiful valentine in your mother's visit and I am so glad. I shall expect you to be her little prince and take good care of her.

At your confirmation I beg of you to consider the seriousness of the step you would take. You are already a little champion of Christ—but it seems to me He would be much more honored, if, after a few years of life's experience, you were to go to him and lay your burden at His feet and say in your heart, 'I am Thine.'

"It is a question you must decide for yourself. Whether you openly accept Christ's banner, or whether you do not, it is quite the same, as I know you are a little worker in His field. My heart's best love, my lad; be true to yourself; love your neighbor, and remember I am

"Always your loving and devoted
Father."

St. Valentine's day came. Paul's valentine was his mother's visit to the military school in Dobb's Ferry; for Dorothy, her father arranged a gay, little party in the New Haven home. All her little friends were invited. Nevin entered into the frolic with boyish glee.

With his own hands he decorated the parlors with ribbons and flowers. He bought the cakes and bonbons and ices—they were all in heart-shaped designs—and set out the little feast on a long table, with lighted candles. For each of the children he had an original valentine. Then when all was ready he sent carriages for his young guests; and they came trooping in. All afternoon he entertained them, singing about "Little Boy Blue" and his other dream-children, playing dances for them, romping with them in the old, familiar parlor games. Once, while the children were all screaming with delight, Mrs. Wells looked in and he exclaimed, laughing: "I'm having the time of my life!"

A merry afternoon; and when the children had been driven home in the dusk, and his own little girl had gone to bed, he went to his studio.

Once, in Italy, he had bought a monk's robe, which he used as a dressing-gown, when he was at work. (It was the pale garb of the monks of the Carthusian order, the color of which corresponds symbolically to the resurrection of Our Lord.) Late that night Mrs. Wells and her sister saw Nevin coming down from his studio on an upper floor. He wore this monk's robe. He opened the front door and went out on the steps. He stood there in the dim cube of light coming from the open door, and the snow fell thickly upon him; and he held out his hands and slowly lifted his arms to heaven in a great pleading gesture. He seemed to be drawn taller—as a man is drawn by prayer or by death. "A wonderful light came from his face," the witnesses said, "as though he were receiving a beautiful message."

Unseeing, he passed them and went back to his studio, but no sound came from his piano that night.

The next day, February 15, Harold Bauer played in New Haven.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Nevin went to the recital early and, before it began, played for half an hour, "just to warm up the piano," as he said to Bauer, laughingly. He returned to the house in Trumbull Street and never left it again. Saturday morning he was indisposed, but there was no thought of a serious illness, and when, in the course of the day, his wife returned from Dobb's Ferry, he said "Now, I am well again." He went to the piano and played accompaniments for his little daughter, and she sang the child-songs he loved. Suddenly his hands seemed to wander and the music stopped. He closed the piano, stood looking at it for a moment and went to his bedroom. In the morning his physician was summoned, for he said he felt "dizzy and a trifle weak." His pulse was normal, and his physician assured him he would be all right in a little while. At half-past one the doctor was called again—he and two other physicians. Nevin was already unconscious. A little after two he suddenly regained consciousness. His little daughter was in the room and he smiled at her. Then he held his wife's hand and whispered: "Anne, I am dying and I do not wish to leave you."

His eyes closed; in a little while the doctors declared that his heart had ceased to beat.

Ethelbert Nevin was 38 years of age; he died at three o'clock, Sunday afternoon, February 17, 1901.

* * * * *

Then for the last time all that was mortal of Ethelbert Nevin went back to Vineacre.

Wednesday afternoon, February 20—at three o'clock, the memorial hour of his death—the funeral service was held in the Presbyterian church of Sewickley. It was not a service like any other. The altar rail was banked high with narcissus, with lilies of the valley, with white roses; and the casket itself was buried in a mound of narcissus.

Before the coffin was brought to the church his "Love Song" was played on the organ; as the procession reached the door, his

"Pilgrim's March" was played. Then a quartet sang his "The Night Hath a Thousand Eyes;" and while the burial rites were read the organ gave softly the melody of "Narcissus." A woman's voice sang "Jesu, Jesu, Miserere." A clergyman prayed while the organ whispered the "Ave Maria" from the dead man's "Day in Venice." Other singers sang "The Rosary." The choir sang his hymn, "Love's Redeeming Work Is Done;" and when the sermon had been preached a violinist played the "Melody," and softly a woman sang "Good Night."

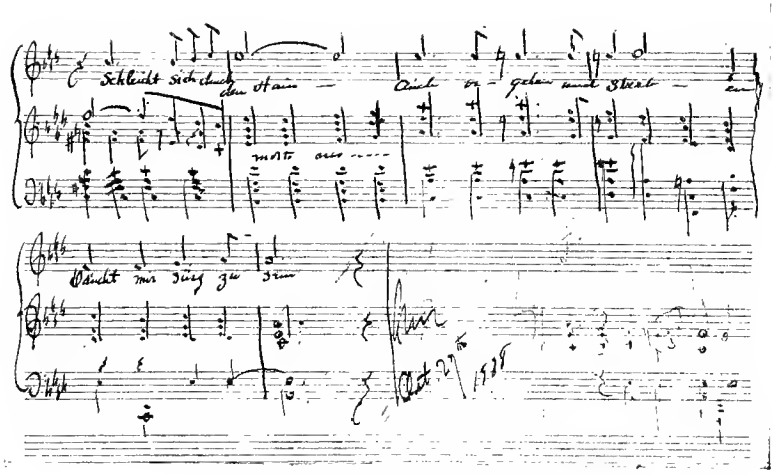
It was a musician's burial-rite.

The casket lid was lifted:

For the last time those who loved him looked on the face eternally young; it was very tranquil now, with a faint smile of wonder on the lips. The long, thin hands were folded on the breast. Over his heart was laid a bunch of narcissus, his wife's last gift.

Then to Beethoven's funeral march the coffin was carried out of the church and on to the little cemetery of Sewickley. There he sleeps in the valley.

Sit illi terra levis.



"Auch vergehen und sterben
Däucht mir süss zu sein."

HERBSTGEFÜHL.

NOTES

NOTES

1—Franz Magnus Böhme

Born at Willerstedt, Weimar, March 11, 1828; died at Dresden, October 18, 1898. Pupil of J. G. Töpfer (Weimar), and Hauptmann and Rietz (Leipzig). For twenty years music teacher in Dresden; received the title of Professor from the King; 1878, teacher of Counterpoint and History of Music at the Hoch Conservatory, Frankfort; retired 1885 to Dresden. Literary works: *Altdeutsches Liederbuch* (Leipzig, 1877; a collection of German folk-songs — words and melodies of 12th and 17th centuries); *Aufgabenbuch zum Studium der Harmonie* (1880); *Kursus der Harmonie* (Mayence, 1882); *Geschichte des Tanzes in Deutschland* (Leipzig, 1895). He is the editor of Erk's *Deutscher Liederhort*, and has published several books of sacred part songs and choruses for men's voices.

2—Stephen Austin Pearce

Born at London, England, November 7, 1836. Pupil of J. L. Hopkins; graduate of Oxford University. Visited the United States and Canada in 1864; became organist and musical director of two London churches; returned to America in 1872 and was appointed instructor of vocal music at Columbia College, New York; lecturer on Harmony, etc., at the General Theological Seminary, on *Music of all Nations* at the Peabody Institute, Baltimore, and on *Classical Orchestral Music* at Johns Hopkins University. Organist of the Collegiate Church, Fifth Avenue and 48th Street, New York.

3—Benjamin Johnson Lang

Born at Salem, Mass., December 28, 1837; died in 1909 at Boston, Mass. A piano pupil of his father, of F. G. Hill of Boston, and of Alfred Jaell and Gustav Satter. In 1855 he studied composition in Berlin and piano playing under Liszt. From 1852, organist successively at Doctor Neale's church, the Old South, the South Congregational church and King's Chapel, Boston. Also, for about twenty-five years, organist of the "Handel and Haydn Society," Boston, of which he became conductor in 1895, succeeding Zerrahn. Besides conducting the "Apollo Club" and the "Cecilia" since their organization, he gave very numerous concerts (orchestral, choral, chamber-music) on his own account. As a pianist, teacher, conductor and organist, he was in the first rank of Boston's musicians for a third of a century; and brought out a long list of important

works by foreign and native composers. His own compositions include the Oratorio, *David;* symphonies and overtures; much chamber and piano music; a great many church compositions; also songs.

4—Stephen Albert Emery

Born at Paris, Maine, October 4, 1841; died at Boston, April 15, 1891. His first teacher was H. S. Edwards of Portland; in 1862 he studied under Plaidy, Papperitz, Richter and Hauptmann at Leipzig, and afterwards at Dresden under Fritz Spindler. He returned to Portland, 1864; went to Boston in 1866, taught in the "N. E. Conservatory" there from 1867; on the foundation of the "College of Music" of Boston University he was appointed professor of Harmony and Counterpoint. He was also assistant editor of the *Musical Herald.* Works: Sonatinas and other pieces for the pianoforte, string quartets, part songs, songs, also two textbooks: "Foundation Studies in Pianoforte Playing" and "Elements of Harmony."

5—Karl Klindworth

Pianist and pedagogue.

Born at Hanover, September 25, 1830. A precocious, self-taught pianist. At six he played a piano arrangement of Boieldieu's *Calife de Bagdad;* but the violin was his chief instrument. At fifteen he wished to go to Spohr, but lack of money prevented it; at seventeen, obliged to earn his own livelihood, he became conductor of a travelling opera troupe. In 1849 on his way to Amsterdam to conduct the German opera, a telegram apprised him that the venture had failed; so he went back to Hanover and gave lessons. While on a concert tour he met Liszt, and in 1852 went to Weimar for two years' study. He made rapid progress and in 1854, armed with letters of introduction, went to London. His first concert on March 30, appears to have made an unfavorable impression, but Wagner, next year, heard and admired him and became his firm friend.

Klindworth gradually made his way in London and remained there from 1854 to 1868 as a piano teacher and concert virtuoso. Anton Rubinstein then called him to Moscow as professor at the Imperial Conservatory. While there he completed two monumental works; his pianoforte scores of Wagner's "Ring des Nibelungen," and a complete revised edition of Chopin's compositions (1878). After Nicholas Rubinstein's death in 1881, Klindworth settled in Berlin, conducting for ten years all the concerts of the *Wagnerverein* and (with Joachim and Wüllner) the Philharmonic Concerts. He also established a *Klavierschule,* Von Bülow co-operating one month each year; this was united with the Scharwenka Conservatory when Klindworth retired to Potsdam in 1893.

As a finishing teacher he was in the front rank. His masterly arrangements of Wagner's music dramas, Schubert's C major Symphony, Tchaikowsky's symphonic poem "Francesca da Rimini" are world renowned, as are his revised edition of Beethoven's Sonatas. Among his original compositions for the pianoforte may be mentioned a difficult and effective Polonaise-Fantaisie and twenty-four grand pianoforte études in all keys.

6—Otto Tiersch

Born at Kalbsrieth, Thuringia, September 1, 1838; died Berlin, November 1, 1892. Pupil of J. G. Töpfer at Weimar, and Bellermann, A. B. Marx, and L. Erk at Berlin. Teacher of singing at the Stern Conservatory, Berlin. As a theorist he was a disciple of Hauptmann, but laid more stress on the relationship by the Third (of keys and chords) than the latter. Writings: *System and Methode der Harmonielehre* (1868): *Elementarbuch der Musikalischen Harmonie- und Modulationslehre* (1874); *Kurze praktische Generalbass, Harmonie-und Modulationslehre* (1876), etc.—

7—Hans Guido von Bülow

A pianist, conductor and critic of wonderful versatility and the highest attainments.

Born at Dresden, January 8, 1830; died February 12, 1894, at Cairo. At the age of nine, his teachers were Friedrich Wieck and Eberwein; when in 1848 he matriculated at Leipzig University as a law student, he continued contrapuntal study under Hauptmann. Next year, however, found him at Berlin where he adopted Wagner's radical tendencies. He was confirmed in his views by hearing "Lohengrin" given at Weimar under Liszt's direction, and joined Wagner in his exile at Zurich. During 1850 and 1851 the master initiated him into the art of conducting. Bülow then acted as conductor in the theatres at Zurich and St. Gallen and finally became Liszt's pupil at Weimar. His first pianistic tour (1853) through Germany and Austria met with fair success; his second in 1855, secured him the succession to Kullak as first pianoforte teacher in the "Stern Conservatory," Berlin, a post held until 1863. He married Cosima Liszt in 1857; in 1858 he was appointed court pianist; in 1863 the University of Jena made him *Dr. Phil. hon. causa.*

Wagner, having been recalled from banishment by Ludwig II of Bavaria, influenced his royal patron to invite Bülow to Munich in 1864 as court pianist. From 1867 to 1869 he was also court-conductor, and Director of the School of Music. From 1869, after separation from his wife, Bülow lived in Florence as a teacher, pianist and conductor till 1872; here he was also a power in musical circles and did much to introduce

German music. After an interval filled chiefly by concert tours, he succeeded Fischer in 1878, as court-conductor at Hanover; but frequent embroilments with the royal superintendent of the theatre led to Bülow's resignation in 1880; and from October 1, of that year, until 1885 he acted as *Hofmusik-Intendant* at Saxe-Meiningen. In 1882 he took his second wife, Marie Schanzer, an actress at Meiningen. From 1885 to 1888, Bülow devoted much time to teaching at the Raff Conservatory, Frankfort, and Klindworth's Conservatory, Berlin. He likewise directed the Philharmonic Concerts at St. Petersburg and Berlin. In 1888, he founded at Hamburg, the "Subscription Concerts" which were a great success from the start.

When Bülow died, Ethelbert Nevin wrote of him:

"The musical world knows of him as the pianist and conductor, and the outside world has heard of him as an eccentric creation. Now that he has ended his life's race and is not here to take exception to the pleasant things said of him — which were to him very disagreeable — I am sure my classmates would all join with thanks and gratitude to him for his patient, kind and encouraging instruction. We were not a brilliant assemblage, just everyday pianoforte pupils, so one can imagine his conscientious devotion to the art of music, when it did not seem an overpowering task for him to labor with our brains and hands for hours at a time.

"There are many young American men and women who have been privileged to work under his guidance and I know they will echo my appreciation and thankfulness that it was possible for us to absorb some of his wonderful knowledge and musical integrity."

8—Rudolf Bial

Born at Habelschwerdt, Silesia, August 26, 1834; died at New York, November 13, 1881. Violinist in Breslau orchestra; then made a tour in Africa and Australia with his brother Karl. Settled in Berlin as conductor of the Kroll orchestra, and (1864) conductor of the Wallner Theatre where his numerous farces and operettas have been performed. Conductor of Italian opera in Berlin, and concert agent in New York.

THE COMPOSITIONS OF ETHELBERT NEVIN

THE COMPOSITIONS OF

ETHELBERT NEVIN

CHRONOLOGICALLY ORDERED, ACCORDING TO THE YEAR OF PUBLICATION

1874

Lilian Polka . . . . . *Piano*

1880

Apple Blossoms . . . . . *Song and Dance*

1881

The Lovers (*In the garden were leisurely walking*) . . . . . *Song*
The Milk Maid (*Shame upon you, Robin*) . . . . . *Song*

1886

"I once had a sweet little doll, dears" . . . . . *Song*
"Stars of the summer night" . . . . . *Song*
Summer Longings (*Ah! My heart is weary waiting*) . . . . . *Song*
"When all the world is young, lad" . . . . . *Song*

1887

Bed-time Song (*Sway to and fro in the twilight gray*) . . . . . *Song*
Cradle Song (*Sleep, baby, sleep*) . . . . . *Song*

1888

Op. 2, Sketch Book

1. Gavotte . . . . . *Piano*
2. Im wunderschönen Monat Mai (*'Twas in the lovely month of May*) . . . . . *Song*
3. Love Song . . . . . *Piano*
4. Du bist wie eine Blume (*Oh! fair, and sweet and holy*) . . . . . *Song*
5. Berceuse . . . . . *Piano*
6. Lehn' deine Wang (*Oh! let thy tears fall fast with mine*) . . . . . *Song*

7. Serenata . . . . . *Piano*
8. "Oh! that we two were maying" . . . . . *Song*
9. Valse Rhapsodie . . . . . *Piano*
10. "In winter I get up at night" . . . . . *Song*
11. "Of speckled eggs the birdie sings" . . . . . *Song*
12. "Dark brown is the river" . . . . . *Song*
13. "The night has a thousand eyes" *Mixed chorus and violin obbligato*

Op. 3, Three Songs

1. "Deep in a rose's glowing heart" *Song with violin and 'cello obbligati*
2. "One spring morning" " " " " " "
3. "Doris" " " " " " "

Serenade (*Good-night, good-night, beloved*) . . . . . *Song*
May Day Dance . . . . . *Unison chorus, with piano 4-hand acc.*

1889

Op. 4, Five Songs

1. Herbstgefühl (*Autumn sadness*) . . . . . *Song*
2. Chanson des Lavandières (*What care I, unwilling*) . . . . . *Song*
3. "'Twas April" . . . . . *Song*
4. Raft Song (*From upwards my raft drifts down*) . . . . . *Song*
5. "Before the daybreak" . . . . . *Song*

The Earth has Grown Old . . . . . *Christmas Carol*
Everywhere, Everywhere, Christmas Tonight . . . . . *Christmas Carol*
Wynken, Blynken and Nod . . . . *Solo and chorus of mixed voices, with piano 4-hand acc.*

1890

Op. 6, Three Duets for the Piano

1. Valse Caprice . . . . . *Piano, four hands*
2. Country Dance . . . . . " " "
3. Mazurka . . . . . " " "

Op. 7, Four Pieces

1. Valzer Gentile . . . . . *Piano*
2. Slumber Song . . . . . *Piano*
3. Intermezzo . . . . . *Piano*
4. Song of the Brook . . . . . *Piano*

Jesu, Jesu, Miserere . . . . . *Sacred Song*
The Silent Skies are Full of Speech . . . . . *Christmas Carol*
Nunc Dimittis . . . . . *Mixed Voices*
Benedictus . . . . . *Mixed Voices*
Jubilate . . . . . *Mixed Voices*

1891

Op. 8, 1. Melody . . . . . *Violin and Piano*
2. Habanera . . . . . *Violin and Piano*
Une Vieille Chanson (*If a lovely lawn there be*) . . . . . *Song*
Barcarolle (*The crimson glow of sunset fades*) . . . . . *Men's Voices*

Op. 12, Five Songs

1. A Summer Day . . . . . *Song*
2. "Beat upon mine little heart" . . . . . *Song*
3. In a Bower . . . . . *Song*
4. Little Boy Blue . . . . . *Song*
5. At Twilight . . . . . *Song*

Op. 13, Water Scenes

1. Dragon Fly . . . . . *Piano*
2. Ophelia . . . . . *Piano*
3. Water Nymph . . . . . *Piano*
4. Narcissus . . . . . *Piano*
5. Barcarolle . . . . . *Piano*

1892

The Rhine and the Moselle . . . . . *Chorus of Men's Voices*

Op. 16, In Arcady

1. A Shepherd's Tale . . . . . *Piano*
2. Shepherds All and Maidens Fair . . . . . *Piano*
3. Lullaby . . . . . *Piano*
4. Tournament . . . . . *Piano*

Op. 17, Three Songs

1. Hab' ein Röslein (*The Rosebud*) . . . . . *Song*
2. Le Vase Brisé (*The Vase*) . . . . . *Song*
3. Rappelle-toi (*Remember well*) . . . . . *Song*

Op. 18, Two Études

1. In the form of a Romance . . . . . *Piano*
2. In the form of a Scherzo . . . . . *Piano*

1893

Barcarolle . . . . . *Violin and Piano*
Evening Song . . . . . *Chorus of Mixed Voices*
My Love . . . . . *Chorus of Mixed Voices*

Op. 20, A Book of Songs

1. A Fair, Good Morn . . . . . *Song*
2. Sleep, little Tulip . . . . . *Song*
3. Ev'ry Night . . . . . *Song*
4. Airly Beacon . . . . . *Song*
5. When the Land Was White with Moonlight . . . . . *Song*
6. A Song of Love . . . . . *Song*
7. Nocturne (*Up to her chamber window*) . . . . . *Song*
8. Dites-moi (*Tell me*) . . . . . *Song*
9. Orsola's Song . . . . . *Song*
10. In the Night . . . . . *Song*

When Christmas Comes . . . . . *Christmas Carol*

1894

The Merry, Merry Lark . . . . . *Song*
La Vie (*Life*) . . . . . *Song*
Ti Saluto (*Thine my greeting*) . . . . . *Song*

1896

Op. 21, May in Tuscany

1. Arlecchino . . . . . *Piano*
2. Notturno (*In Boccaccio's Villa*) . . . . . *Piano*
3. Barchetta . . . . . *Piano*
4. Misericordia . . . . . *Piano*
5. Il Rusignuolo (*In my neighbor's garden*) . . . . . *Piano*
6. La Pastorella (*Montepiano*) . . . . . *Piano*

Op. 22, Two Songs

1. Rechte Zeit (*Time enough!*) . . . . . *Song*
2. Mädel, wie blüht's (*Maiden, how sweet*) . . . . . *Song*

1898

The Rosary ..... *Song*
Life Lesson (*There, little girl, don't cry*) ..... *Song*
"My Love's Waitin'" ..... *Song*

Op. 25, A Day in Venice

1. Alba (*Dawn*) ..... *Piano*
2. Gondolieri (*Gondoliers*) ..... *Piano*
3. Canzone Amorosa (*Love Song*) ..... *Piano*
4. Buona Notte (*Good Night*) ..... *Piano*

March of the Pilgrims, for the Knight Templars ..... *Piano*

1899

Op. 28, Songs from Vineacre

1. A Necklace of Love ..... *Song*
2. Sleeping and Dreaming ..... *Song*
3. The Dream-maker Man ..... *Song*
4. Ein Liedchen ..... *Song*
5. My Desire ..... *Song*
6. The Nightingale's Song ..... *Song*
7. La Lune Blanche ..... *Song*
8. Ein Heldenlied ..... *Song*

Op. 29, Captive Memories ..... *Bar. Solo, Solo Quartet and Reader; Song Cycle*

Op. 30, En Passant

1. A Fontainebleau ..... *Piano*
2. In Dreamland ..... *Piano*
3. Napoli ..... *Piano*
4. At Home (*A June Night in Washington*) ..... *Piano*

1900

Memorial Day ..... *Mixed Voices*

POSTHUMOUS WORKS

1901

An African Love Song ..... *Song*
"Mighty lak' a rose" ..... *Song*
To Anne ..... *Song*

At Rest ..... *Song*
The Woodpecker ..... *Song*
The Four Seasons ..... *Mixed Voices*

1902

O'er Hill and Dale

'Twas a lover and his lass ..... *Piano*
The Thrush ..... *Piano*
Love is a-straying, ever since maying ..... *Piano*
The Lark is on the wing ..... *Piano*

The Quest ..... *Cantata*

1907

Sweetest Eyes were ever seen ..... *Song*

1909

Wedding Morn ..... *Song*

1913

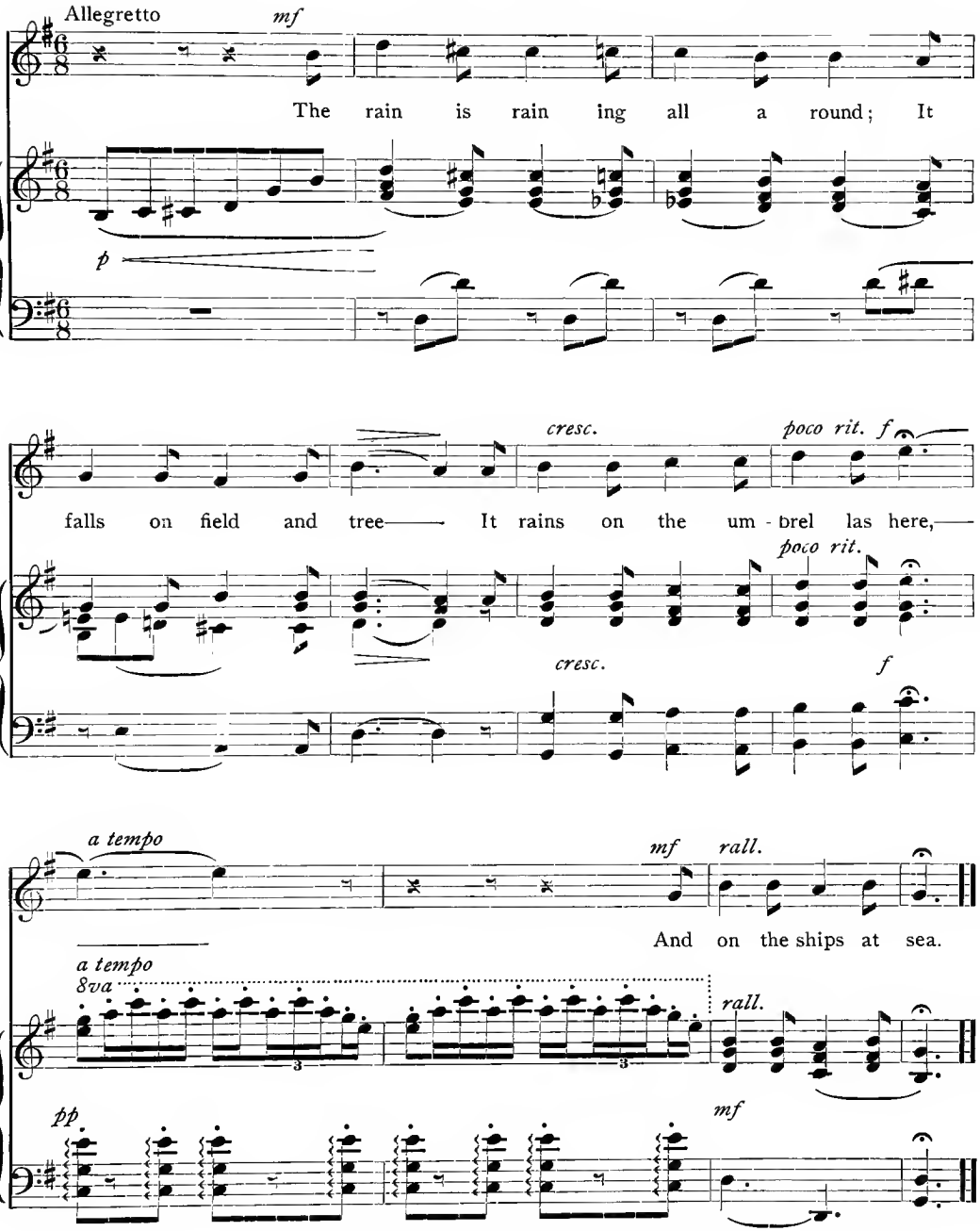
Marguerites ..... *Song*
Rain Song ..... *Song*
I Fear Thy kisses, gentle maiden ..... *Song*

MUSIC

Rain Song

R. L. Stevenson

Ethelbert Nevin



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Marguerites

ETHELBERT NEVIN

Moderato : con espressione

mp

p

col Pedale

poco rit. *dolce* *a tempo*

mp

An an gel's smile came down to

p

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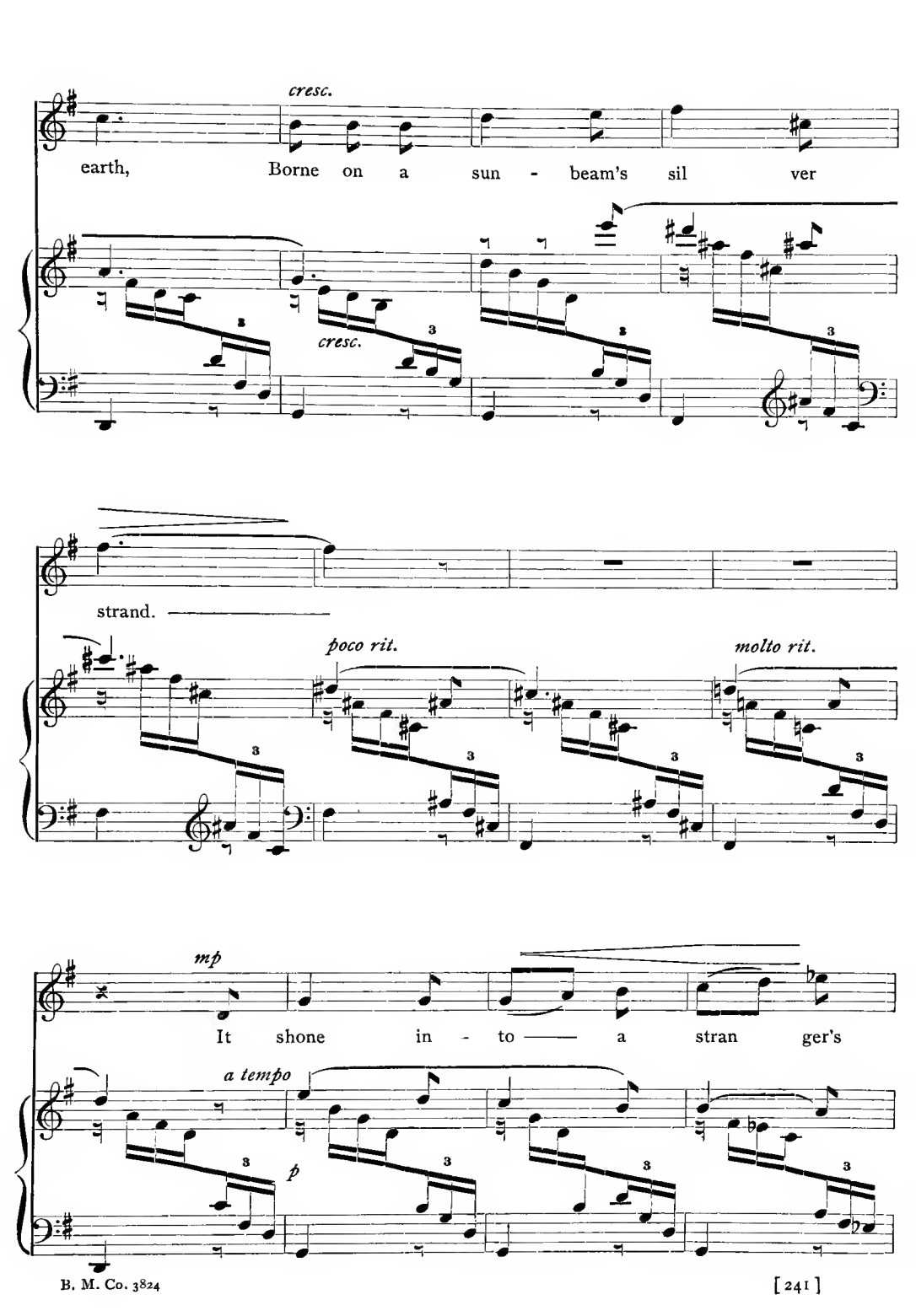

cresc.
earth, Borne on a sun - beam's sil ver
cresc.
strand.
poco rit.
molto rit.
mp
It shone in - to a stran ger's
a tempo
p

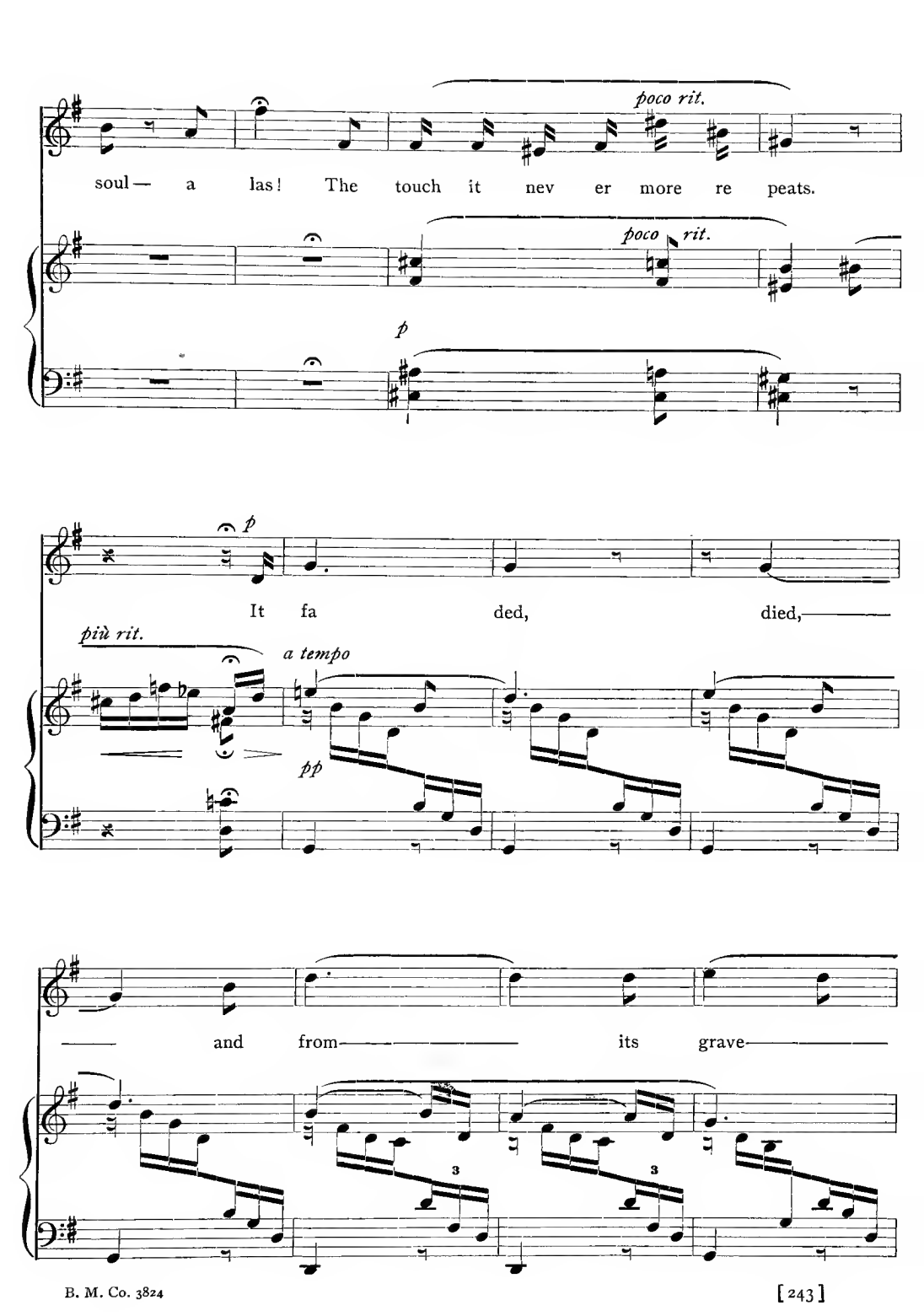
heart, And kiss'd a ba - by's dim pl'd

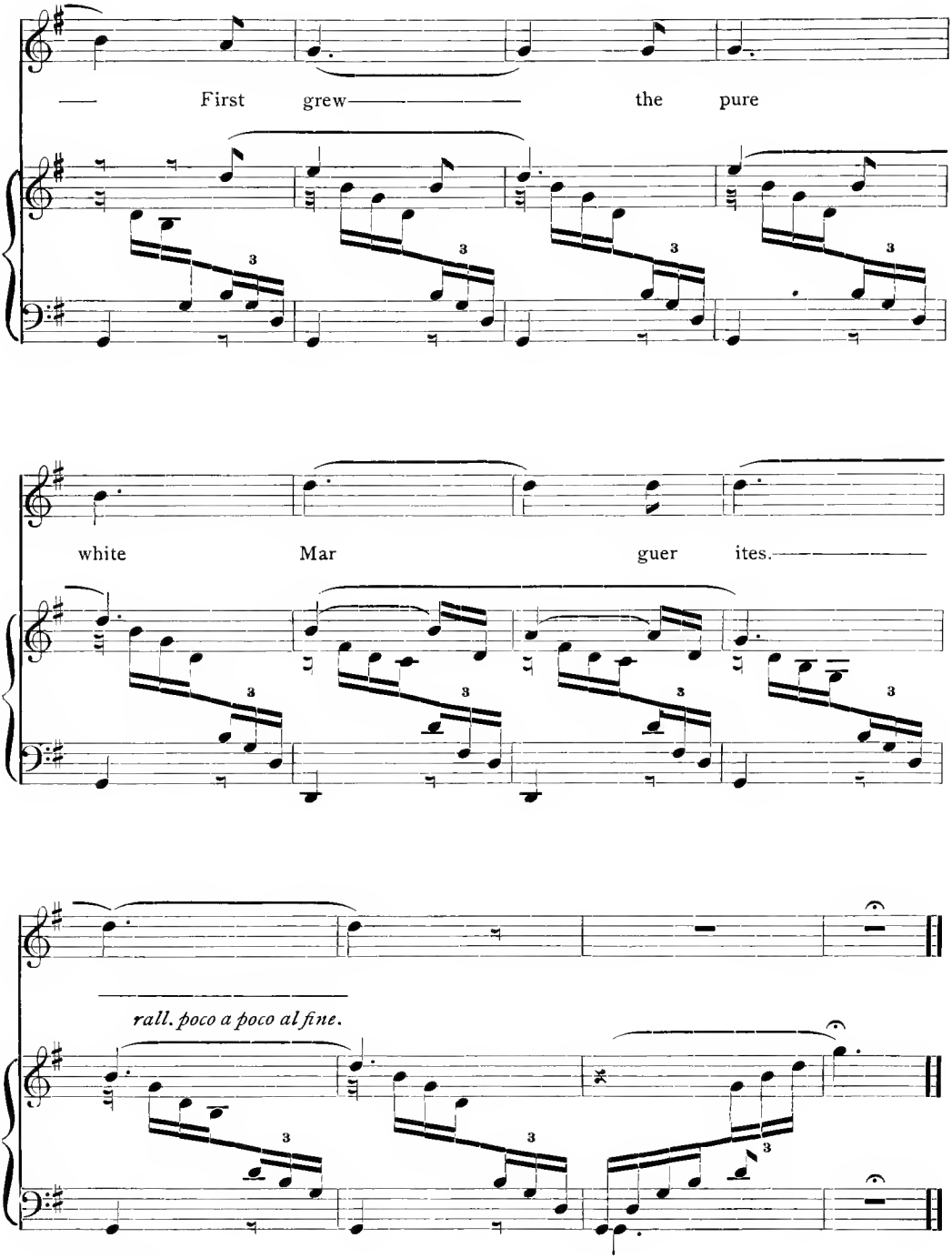
hand.

RECIT.

It touch'd a self-ish

rit.


poco rit.
soul— a las! The touch it nev er more re peats.
poco rit.
p
p
It fa ded, died,
più rit.
a tempo
pp
and from its grave
3
3


First grew the pure
white Mar guer ites.
rall. poco a poco al fine.

I Fear Thy Kisses, Gentle Maiden

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

ETHELBERT NEVIN

mp Andante moderato

1. I fear thy kiss - es, gen - tle maid - en, Thou need - est not fear
2. I fear thy mien, thy tones, thy mo - tion; Thou need - est not fear

p

mf

mine. My spir - it is too deep ly la den,
mine. In no - cent is the heart's de vo - tion,

mp

largamente *rall.*

Love,— to bur - den thine.
With which I wor ship thine.

largamente *rall.* *più rall.*

mf *mp*

Ped. *Ped.*

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A Christmas Carol

MARGARET E. SANGSTER — ETHELBERT NEVIN

Allegretto semplice

mf

1. When

poco rit.

p *poco cresc.* *mf*

Christ mas comes with song and stir, We bring our boughs of
Christ mas comes we light our tree, In cheer and mirth and
Christ mas comes, wher e'er we roam, We hear the mer ry
Christ mas comes on sea or land, 'Tis love sends gifts from

a tempo

mp

col Pedale

poco rit. *a tempo* *mf*

pine and fir; Oh, sweet bells, ring! And all we meet to
jol li ty, Oh, sweet bells, ring! Our ta pers make a
sounds of home, Oh, sweet bells, ring! And bus y peo ple
hand to hand, Oh, sweet bells, ring! But dear est gift, the

poco rit. *a tempo*

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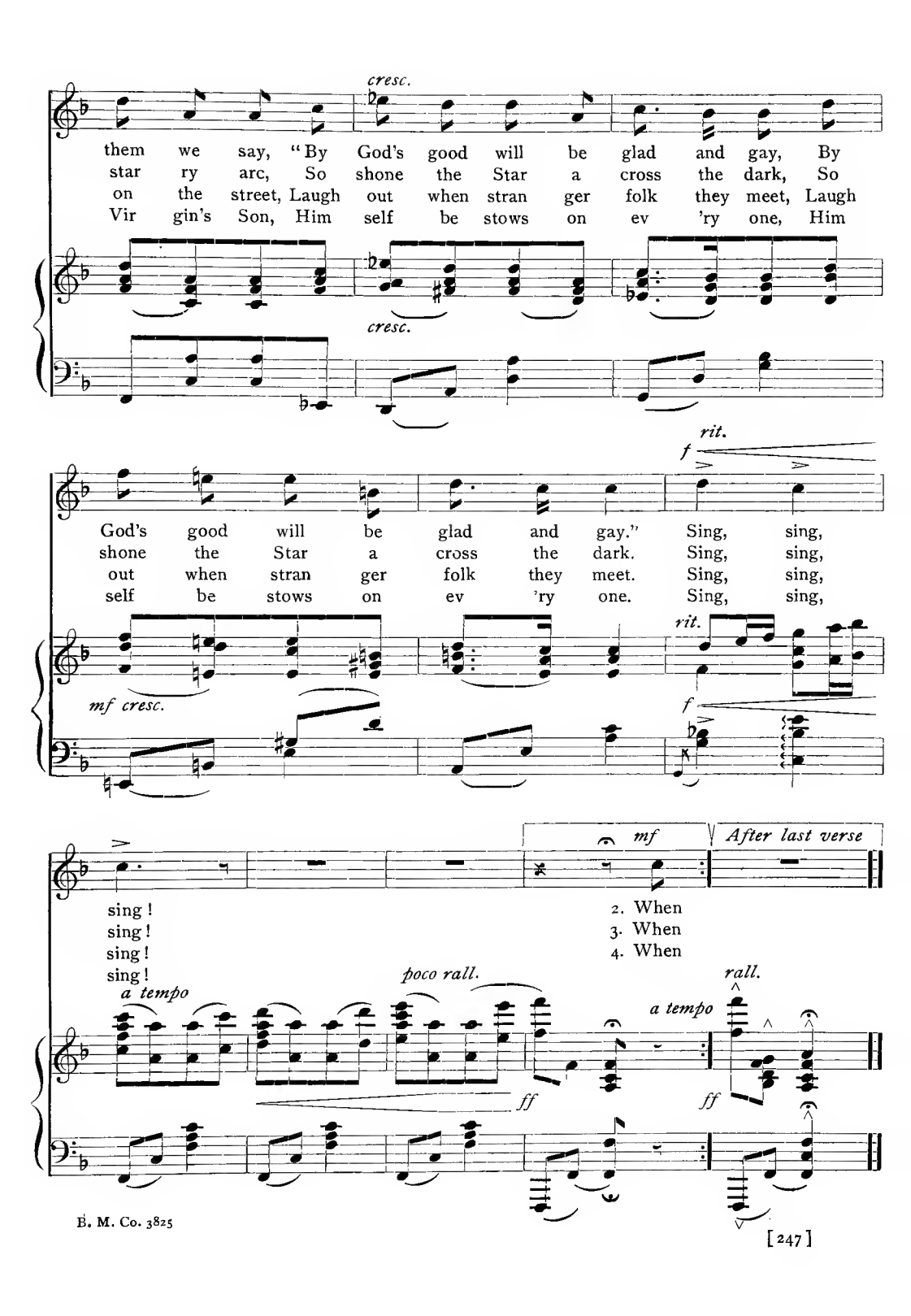
cresc.
them we say, "By God's good will be glad and gay, By
star ry arc, So shone the Star a cross the dark, So
on the street, Laugh out when stran ger folk they meet, Laugh
Vir gin's Son, Him self be stows on ev 'ry one, Him
cresc.
rit.
f
God's good will be glad and gay." Sing, sing,
shone the Star a cross the dark. Sing, sing,
out when stran ger folk they meet. Sing, sing,
self be stows on ev 'ry one. Sing, sing,
mf cresc.
rit.
f
mf
After last verse
sing!
sing!
sing!
sing!
2. When
3. When
4. When
a tempo
poco rall.
ff
rall.
a tempo
ff